HELEN FORD

ALGER

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HELEN FORD

BY

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

AUTHOR OF "ERIE TRAIN BOY," "TELEGRAPH BOY,"
"YOUNG MINER," "LUKE WALTON," ETC., ETC.

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PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.

HELEN FORD.

CHAPTER I.

IN SEARCH OF LODGINGS

Not many minutes' walk from Broadway, situated on one of the cross streets intersecting the great thoroughfare, is a large building not especially inviting in its aspect, used as a lodging and boarding-house. It is very far from fashionable, since, with hardly an exception, those who avail themselves of its accommodations belong to the great class who are compelled to earn their bread before they eat it. Mechanics, workingmen, clerks on small salaries, seamstresses, and specimens of decayed gentility, all find a place beneath its roof, forming a somewhat miscellaneous assemblage. It must not be supposed, however, that perfect equality exists even here. It is often remarked, that social distinctions are more jealously maintained in the lower ranks than in the higher. Here, for instance, Alphonso Eustace, a dashing young clerk, who occupies the first floor front, looks down with *hauteur* upon the industrious mechanic, who rooms in the second story back. Mademoiselle Fanchette, the fashionable *modiste*, occupying the second story front, considers it beneath her dignity to hold much intercourse with Martha Grey, the pale seam-

stress, whose small room at the head of the third landing affords a delightful prospect of the back yard. Even the occupants of the fourth story look down, which indeed their elevated position enables them to do, upon the basement lodgers across the way.

Mother Morton is the presiding genius of the establishment. She is a stout, bustling woman of considerable business capacity; one of those restless characters to whom nothing is so irksome as want of occupation, and who are never more in their element than when they have a world of business on their hands, with little time to do it in.

Mrs. Morton is a widow, having with characteristic despatch, hustled her husband out of the world in less than four years from her wedding-day. Shortly afterwards, being obliged to seek a subsistence in some way, good luck suggested the expediency of opening a boarding-house. Here at length she found scope for her superabundant energies, and in the course of seventeen years had succeeded in amassing several thousand dollars, in the investment of which she had sought advice from no one, but acted according to the dictates of her own judgment. These investments, it must be acknowledged, proved to have been wisely made, affording a complete refutation, in one case at least, of the assertion often made, that women have no business capacity.

Why Mrs. Morton should have had the title of mother, so generally conferred upon her, is not quite clear. She had never been blessed with children. It might have been her ample propor-

tions, for Nature had molded her when in a generous mood; but at all events for many years, she had been best known by the name of Mother Morton.

Our landlady required promptness on the part of her lodgers in the payment of their bills. She had no mercy on those whom she suspected of fraudulent intentions. In such cases she had but one remedy, and that a most efficacious one, —immediate ejectment. When, however, no such design was suspected, and failure to make the regular payment proceeded from sickness or misfortune, she had been known to manifest great kindness and consideration. When, for example —Martha Grey, the young seamstress, was stricken down by a fever, induced by over-work, Mother Morton attended her faithfully during her illness, and, so far from making an extra charge, even remitted her rent for the time she had been ill.

With these preliminary words, our story begins.

The dinner hour had passed. The last lingerer at the table had left the scene of devastation, which he had contributed to make, and the landlady, who superintended the clearing away, had just sent away the last dish, when her attention was arrested by a faint ring of the door-bell. Hastily adjusting her dress before the glass, she proceeded to answer the summons in person.

Opening the door, she saw standing before her a young girl of perhaps fourteen, and a man, who, though but little over forty, looked nearly ten years older. The little girl is mentioned first, for in spite of her youth, and the filial rela-

tion which she bore to her companion, she was the spokesman, and appeared to feel that the responsibility in the present instance fell upon her. There was a curious air of protection in her manner towards her father, as if the relationship between them were reversed, and he were the child.

"You have lodgings to let?" she said, in a tone of inquiry.

"We're pretty full, now," said Mother Morton, looking with some curiosity at the eager face of the young questioner. "All our best rooms are taken."

"That makes no difference," said the young girl; "about the best rooms, I mean. We are not able to pay much."

She cast a glance at her father, who wore an abstracted look as if he were thinking of some matter quite foreign to the matter in hand. Catching her glance and thinking that an appeal was made to him, he said, hurriedly, "Yes, my child, you are quite right."

"I wonder whether he's in his right mind," thought the practical Mrs. Morton. "The little girl seems to be worth two of him."

"I have one room in the fourth story," she said aloud, "which is now vacant. It is rather small; but, if it will suit you, you shall have it cheaper on that account."

"I should like to see it," said the child. "Come, father," taking him by the hand, and leading him as if she were the elder; "we're going up-stairs to look at a room which, perhaps, we may like well enough to hire."

At the head of the fourth landing the landlady

threw open a door, revealing a small room, some twelve feet square, scantily provided with furniture. Its dreariness was, in some measure, relieved by a good supply of light,—there being two windows.

The young girl was evidently accustomed to look on the bright side of things; for, instead of spying out the defects and inconveniences of the apartment, her face brightened, and she said, cheerfully, "Just what we want, isn't it, papa? See how bright and pleasant it is."

Thus applied to, her father answered, "Yes, certainly;" and relapsed into his former abstraction.

"I think," said the young girl, addressing the landlady, "that we will engage the room; that is," she added, with hesitation, "if the rent isn't too high."

Mother Morton had been interested in the child's behalf by the mingling of frank simplicity and worldly wisdom, which she exhibited, and perhaps not least by the quiet air of protection which she assumed towards her father, for whom it was evident she entertained the deepest and most devoted affection. An impulse, which she did not pause to question, led her to name a rent much less than she had been accustomed to receive for the room.

"One dollar and seventy-five cents a week," repeated the child. "Yes, that is reasonable. I think we had better engage the room; don't you, papa?"

"Eh?"

"I think we had better engage this room at one dollar and seventy-five cents a week."

"Oh, certainly,—that is, by all means, if you think best, my child. You know I leave all such matters to you. I have so many other things to think of," he added, dreamily, raising his hand to his forehead.

"Yes," said the child, softly; "I know you have, dear papa."

"We'll take the room," she said to Mother Morton, whose curiosity momentarily increased, "at the price you named, and will commence now, if you have no objection."

"Oh, no; but your baggage. You will need to bring that."

"We have not much to bring. We shall get it to-morrow."

"You will board yourselves?" asked the landlady.

"Yes, I shall cook. I am quite used to it," was the grave reply.

"At any rate you won't feel like it to-night. I will send you up some supper."

"Thank you," said the child, her face lighting up gratefully; "I am sure you are very kind," and she held out her hand in instinctive acknowledgment.

If Mother Morton had before been prepossessed in her favor, this act, so frank and childlike, completed the conquest of her heart.

"I am very glad," said she, quite enveloping in her own broad palm the little hand which the child extended; "I am very glad, my dear child, that you are going to live here. I think I shall like you."

"How kind you are!" said the child, earnestly. "Everybody is kind to father and me;" and she

turned towards her parent, who was gazing abstractedly from the window.

"Your father does not say much," said Mrs. Morton, unable to repress her curiosity.

"He has a great deal on his mind," said the child, lowering her voice, and looking cautiously to see whether he heard her; but the report of a pistol would scarcely have disturbed him, so profound seemed his meditations.

"Oh!" said the landlady, somewhat surprised; "business, is it?"

"No," said the child; "not exactly business."

Observing that the landlady looked thoroughly mystified, she added, quietly, "Papa has a great genius for inventing. He is going to make a discovery that will give him money and fame. He is thinking about it all the time, and that is the reason he doesn't say much. I wish he wouldn't think *quite* so much, for I am afraid it will hurt him."

Mother Morton looked at the father with a sudden accession of respect.

"Perhaps there is something in him, after all," she thought. "There must be, or this little girl, who has a great deal more sense than many that are older, wouldn't believe in him so firmly. I suppose he's a genius. I've heard of such, but I never saw one before. I must think well of him for the child's sake."

"I hope your father'll succeed," she said aloud, "for your sake, my child. I am going downstairs now. Is there anything you would like to have sent up?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"One thing more. Your names, please?"

"My father's name is Robert Ford. My name is Helen."

"Good afternoon, Helen. I hope you will like your room."

"Thank you; I am quite sure I shall."

The landlady descended the stairs, wondering a little at the sudden liking she began to feel for her young lodger.

CHAPTER II.

THE DREAMER.

The light of a June morning lent a warm and cheerful look to the broad streets, and under its influence even the dingy lanes and alleys looked a little less gloomy than usual. The spell which had lain upon the city during the night season was broken. Here and there might be seen a vegetable cart or a milk wagon rumbling through the streets, of late so silent and deserted. Sleepy clerks unlocked the shops and warehouses, and swept them in readiness for the business of the day. Hackmen betook themselves to the steamboat landings in the hope of obtaining a fare before breakfast. Creeping out from beneath old wagons and stray corners where they had been able to procure shelter and lodging, came the newsboys, those useful adjuncts to our modern civilization. Little time wasted they on the duties of the toilet, but shook themselves wide awake, and with the keen instinct of trade, hurried to the newspaper offices to secure their pile of merchandise.

Morning found no sluggards at Mrs. Morton's

boarding-house. With the first flush of dawn she was astir, ordering about her servants, and superintending the preparations for breakfast. This must be ready at an early hour, since her boarders were, for the most part, engaged in some daily avocation which required their early attention.

With the early sun Helen rose. Her father was still sleeping. From the nail on which it hung she took down her bonnet, and, with a tin pail depending from her arm, she left the room with softened tread, lest she might awaken her father. Betaking herself to a baker's near by, she bought a couple of loaves of bread, and stopping a milkman, had her pail filled with milk. A half-pound of butter purchased at a grocery completed her simple marketing, and she hastened home.

When she entered the boarding-house, her cheeks were flushed with exercise, her eyes sparkled with a pleasant light, and her rare beauty, despite her plain attire, appeared to unusual advantage. She returned just in time to meet the boarders descending to breakfast. Her childish beauty did not fail to attract attention. Conscious of being observed, Helen blushed a deeper crimson, which added to the charm of her beauty.

"Hey! What have we here?" exclaimed Alphonso Eustace, the dashing young clerk, fixing a glance of undisguised admiration upon her embarrassed face. "A very Peri, by Jove! Deign to inform me, fair maid, by what name thou art known."

So saying, he purposely placed himself directly in her path.

"Will you let me pass, sir?" said Helen, uneasily. "My father is waiting for me."

"Your father! Then you live here. I am glad of that. We shall be well acquainted before long, I hope. Won't you tell me your name?"

"My name is Helen Ford," said the child, rather reluctantly, for the clerk did not impress her favorably.

"And mine is Alphonso Eustace. Let us shake hands to our better acquaintance."

"I have both hands full," returned Helen, who did not much relish the freedom of her new acquaintance.

"Then I will await another opportunity. But you don't seem gracious, my dear. You must be very tired, carrying that heavy pail. Allow me to carry it for you."

"I am not at all tired, and I would much rather carry it myself."

Helen managed to slip by, much to her relief, and somewhat to the discomfiture of the young clerk, who could not conceal from himself that his overtures had met with a decided rebuff.

"Never mind," thought he; "we shall be better acquainted by and by."

"By the way, Mrs. Morton," he inquired, "tell me something about the little fairy I met on the stairs. I tried to scrape acquaintance with her, but she gave me very short answers."

"I suppose it was Helen Ford," returned the landlady. "She is a little fairy, as you say. Is your coffee right, M'lle Fanchette?"

"Quite right," replied that lady, sipping it. "What room do the little girl and her father occupy?"

"The fourth story back."

"Ah, indeed!" said M'lle Fanchette, elevating her eyebrows. It was easy to see that lodging in the fourth story back was sufficient in her eyes to stamp Helen as one whose acquaintance it was quite beneath her dignity to cultivate.

"She has a very sweet, attractive face," said Martha Grey.

"Beautiful! angelic!" exclaimed Mr. Eustace, with enthusiasm.

"I don't see anything very beautiful or angelic about her," remarked M'lle Fanchette, who would much prefer to have had her dashing neighbor's admiration bestowed upon herself.

"You should have seen the beautiful flush upon her cheeks."

"So I did."

"And did you not admire it?"

"I happened to look into the kitchen yesterday," returned M'lle Fanchette, passing her plate for some toast, "and I saw Bridget who had been over the hot stove all day, with just such a pair of red cheeks. Did I admire her?"

There was a momentary silence. All who had seen Helen, felt the injustice of the comparison.

"There is no accounting for tastes," interrupted the landlady, somewhat indignantly. "If you had seen the tenderness with which she waits upon her father, who, poor man, seems quite incapable of taking care of himself, you would find that she has a heart as beautiful as her face. Her beauty is not her only attraction."

"What does her father do?"

"That is more than I can tell. Helen says

that he is an inventor, and that he has made some discovery which is going to make them rich."

"After all," thought M'lle Fanchette, "it may be well to notice her. But they are poor now?" she said aloud.

"Yes. They seem to have little baggage, and dress quite plainly. They cannot have much property."

Meanwhile, Helen, quite unconscious that she had been a subject of discussion among the boarders, drew out the table into the middle of the room, and spread over it a neat white cloth. She then placed upon it two bowls of different sizes into which she poured the milk. Several slices were cut from one of the loaves and laid on a plate. Near by stood the butter. These simple preparations being concluded, she called upon her father to partake.

"You are a good girl, Helen," said he, rousing for the moment from his fit of abstraction. "You are a good girl, and I don't know how I should get along without you."

"And I am sure I could not get along without you, papa," was her reply, accompanied with a glance of affection.

"Have you not always cared for me, Helen, and given up the society of those of your own age in order to minister to my comfort? But it shall not always be so. Some day I shall be rich——"

"When you have completed your invention, papa."

"Yes, when that is completed," said her father, earnestly. "Then we shall be rich and honored, and my Helen shall be dressed in silks, and ride in a carriage of her own."

"You are quite sure you shall succeed, papa?"

"I am sure of it," he answered, in a tone of quiet conviction. "I only fear that some one will be beforehand with me, and snatch away the honor for which I am toiling. To me it seems passing strange that mankind should have been content for so many years to grope about upon the earth and never striven to rise into the nobler element of the air, while the sea, which presents difficulties as great, is traversed in every part. For me," he continued, assuming a loftier mien, and pacing the small room proudly,—"for me it remains to open a new highway to the world. What compared with this will be the proudest triumphs of modern science? How like a snail shall we regard the locomotive, which now seems a miracle of swiftness! Borne aloft by the appliances which I shall furnish, man will emulate the proud flight of the eagle. He will skim over land and sea, and in his airy flight look down upon the monuments of human skill and industry flitting before him, like the shifting scenes of a panorama."

"It will be a glorious destiny," said the child, "and how proud I shall feel of you who have done all this!"

"While we are speaking, time passes," said the father. "I should be at work even now. I must bring hither my implements without delay. Every moment wasted before I attain my object, is not my loss, only, but the world's."

"Wait till I have cleared away the table, papa, and I will go with you."

This was speedily done, and the two descended the stairs, and went forth into the busy streets

hand in hand. Helen diligently cared for the safety of her father, who, plunged into his usual abstraction, would more than once have been run over by some passing vehicle but for her guardianship.

CHAPTER III.

A HALF RECOGNITION.

The character of Robert Ford may be divined without much difficulty from the glimpses which have already been given. He was an amiable man, but strikingly deficient in those practical traits which usually mark our countrymen and command success even under the most unpromising circumstances. He was not a man to succeed in business, nor suited for the rough jostling with the world which business men must expect. He ought rather to have been a quiet scholar, and dreamed away long days in his library,—"the world forgetting, by the world forgot." Such would have been his choice if his circumstances had been easy. Under the pressure of necessity he had turned aside from the ordinary paths of money-making to devote himself to a chimerical plan by which he hoped to attain wealth and distinction.

No man of a well-balanced mind would have labored with such sanguine expectations of success on a project so uncertain as the invention of a flying machine. But Mr. Ford had not a well-balanced mind. He was much given to theorizing, and, like many amiable but obstinate persons, it was as difficult to dislodge from his

mind a purpose which had once gained entrance there as to convert him by some miraculous transformation into a sharp man of the world. Had he lived in the middle ages it is very probable that his tastes and the habits of his mind would have led him to devote himself to alchemy, or some other recondite science, which would have consumed his time and money without any adequate return.

We will now suppose three months to have elapsed since the events recorded in our first chapter; three months in which the flowers of June had been exchanged for the fruits of September, and the mellow beauty of autumn had succeeded the glory of early summer.

During this time Helen has become an established favorite with all the inmates except M'lle Fanchette, who yet, finding the tide of general opinion against her, is content with privately stigmatizing the child as an "upstart," and a forward hussy," though in truth it would be difficult to imagine anything more modest or retiring than her conduct. She and her father still occupy the little room in the fourth story back. Nothing has come of Mr. Ford's invention yet, though he has filled the room with strange, out-of-the-way appliances, wheels, and bits of machinery, on which he labors day after day in the construction of his proposed flying machine. His repeated failures have little effect in damping his spirits. He has the true spirit of a discoverer, and is as sanguine as ever of ultimate success. He has learned the difficult lesson of patience.

"With such an end in view," he sometimes

exclaims with enthusiasm, half to himself, half to Helen, "what matter a few months or years! Rome was not built in a day, nor is it to be expected that a discovery which is to affect the whole world in its consequences, should be the result of a few hours' or days' labor."

Helen, whose veneration for her father is unbounded, listens with the fullest confidence, to his repeated assurances. It pains her to find that others are more skeptical. Even Mother Morton who, though some find her rough, is invariably kind to Helen, looks upon the father as a visionary, since she has discovered the nature of his labors. She one day intimated this to Helen. It was some time before the latter could understand that a doubt was entertained as to her father's success, and when the conviction came slowly, it brought such an expression of pain to her face, that the landlady resolved never in future to venture upon an allusion which should grieve the child, whom she could not but love the better for her filial trust and confidence.

Meanwhile the rent of the apartment which they occupy, and the cost of living, simple as is their fare, have sensibly diminished their scanty supply of money. This Helen, who is the steward and treasurer, cannot help seeing, and she succeeds in obtaining work from the slop-shops. Her father does not at first discover this. One day, however, he said abruptly, as if the idea had for the first time occurred to him, "Helen, you always seem to be sewing, lately."

The child cast down her eyes in some embarrassment.

"You cannot be sewing so much for yourself,"

continued her father. "Why, what is this?" taking a boy's vest from her reluctant fingers. "Surely, this is not yours."

"No, papa," answered Helen, laughing; "you don't think I have turned Bloomer, do you?"

"Then what does it mean?" questioned her father, in real perplexity.

"Only this, papa, that being quite tired of sitting idle, and having done all my own sewing, I thought I might as well fill up the time, and earn some money at the same time by working for other people. Is that satisfactory?" she concluded, playfully.

"Surely this was not necessary," said Mr. Ford, with pain. "Are we then so poor?"

"Do not be troubled, papa," said Helen, cheerfully. "We could get along very well without it; but I wanted something to do, and it gives me some pocket-money for myself. You must know that I am getting extravagant."

"Is that all?" said her father, in a tone of relief, the shadow passing from his face. "I am glad of it. I could not bear to think of my little Helen being compelled to work. Some day," passing his hands fondly over her luxuriant curls; "some day she shall have plenty of money."

This thought incited him to fresh activity, and with new zeal he turned to the odd jumble of machinery in the corner.

The evening meal was studiously simple and frugal, though Helen could not resist the temptation of now and then purchasing some little delicacy for her father. He was so abstracted that he gave little heed to what was set before him, and never noticed that Helen always ab-

stained from tasting any luxury thus procured, confining herself strictly to the usual frugal fare.

After tea it was the custom for father and daughter to walk out, sometimes in one direction sometimes in another. Often they would walk up Broadway, and Helen, at least, found amusement in watching the shifting scenes which present themselves to the beholder in that crowded thoroughfare. Life in all its varieties, from pampered wealth to squalid poverty, too often the fruit of a mis-spent life, jostled each other upon the sidewalk, or in the street. The splendid equipage dashes past the humble handcart; the dashing buggy jostles against the loaded dray. Broadway is no exclusive thoroughfare. In the shadow of the magnificent hotel leans the foreign beggar, just landed on our shores, and there is no one to bid him "move on." The shop windows, too, are a free "World's Fair Exhibition," constantly changing, never exhausted. Helen and her father had just returned from a leisurely walk, taken at the close of a day of labor and confinement, and paused to rest for a moment on the west side of the Park.

While they were standing there, a handsome carriage drove past. Within were two gentlemen. One was already well advanced in years, as his gray hairs and wrinkled face made apparent. He wore an expression of indefinable sorrow and weariness, as if life had long ago ceased to have charms for him. His companion might be somewhat under forty. He was tall and spare, with a dark, forbidding face, which repelled rather than attracted the beholder.

As the carriage neared the Park, the elder of

the two looked out to rest his gaze, wearied with the sight of brick and stone, upon the verdure of this enclosure. This, be it remembered, was twenty years since, before the Park had so completely lost its fresh country look. He chanced to see Mr. Ford and Helen. He started suddenly in visible agitation.

"Look, Lewis!" he exclaimed, clutching the arm of his companion, and pointing to Mr. Ford.

The younger man started almost imperceptibly, and his face paled, but he almost instantly recovered himself.

"Yes," he said, carelessly; "the Park is looking well."

"Not that, not that," said the old man, hurriedly. "That man with the little girl. He is,—he must be Robert, my long-lost son. Stop the carriage. I must get out."

"My dear uncle," expostulated the younger man, who had been addressed as Lewis, "you are laboring under a strange hallucination. This man does not in the least resemble my cousin. Besides, you remember that we have undoubted proof of his death in Chicago two years since."

"You may be right," said the old man, as he sank back into his seat with a sigh, "but the resemblance was wonderful."

"But, uncle, let me suggest that more than fifteen years have passed away since my cousin left home, and even if he were living, he must have changed so much that we could not expect to recognize him."

"Perhaps you are right, Lewis; and yet, when I looked at that man, I was startled by a look that brought before me my dead wife,—my

precious Helen. I fear I have dealt harshly with her boy."

He relapsed into a silence which his companion did not care to disturb. He watched guardedly the expression of the old man, and a close observer might have detected a shade of anxiety, as if there were something connected with his uncle's present mood which alarmed him. After a short scrutiny he himself fell into thought, and as we are privileged to read what is concealed from all else, we will give the substance of his reflections.

"Here is a new danger to be guarded against, just at the most critical time, too. Shall I never attain the object of my wishes? Shall I never be paid for the years in which I have danced attendance upon my uncle? I *must* succeed by whatever means. He cannot last much longer."

The evident weakness of his uncle seemed to justify his prediction. He looked like one whose feet are drawing very near the brink of that mysterious river which it is appointed to all of us at some time to cross.

CHAPTER IV.

A GLANCE BACKWARDS.

It was growing late. Night had drawn its sombre veil over the great city, and the streets, a little while before filled with busy passers-by, now echoed but seldom to the steps of an occasional wayfarer. The shops were closed, the long day assigned to trade being over. To plodding feet and busy brains, to frames weary with ex-

hausting labor, to minds harassed by anxious cares, night came in friendly guise, bringing the rest and temporary oblivion of sleep.

From a small building in a by-street, or rather lane, which nevertheless was not far removed from the main thoroughfare, there gleamed a solitary candle, emitting a fitful glare, which served, so far as it went, to give a very unfavorable idea of the immediate vicinity. Within, a young man, painfully thin, was seated at a low table, engrossing a legal document. The face was not an agreeable one. The prevailing expression was one of discontent and weak repining. He was one who could complain of circumstances without having the energy to control them; born to be a subordinate of loftier and more daring intellects.

He wrote with rapidity and, at the same time, with scrupulous elegance. He was evidently a professional copyist.

After bending over his writing for a time, during which he was rapidly approaching the completion of his task, he at length threw aside the pen, exclaiming, with an air of relief, "At last it is finished! Thank Heaven! that is," he added, after a slight pause, "if there be such a place, which I am sometimes inclined to doubt. Finished; but what after all is a single day's work? To-night I may sleep in peace, but to-morrow the work must begin once more. It is like a tread-mill, continually going round, but making no real progress. I wish," he resumed, after a slight pause, "there were some way of becoming suddenly rich, without this wear and tear of hand and brain. I don't know that I am

so much surprised at the stories of those who, in utter disgust of labor, have sold themselves to the arch fiend. Why should I have been born with such a keen enjoyment of luxuries, and without the means of obtaining them? Why should I be doomed——"

When discontent had thus opened the way for its favorable reception, temptation came.

There was a knock at the door.

Thinking it might be some strolling vagabond who, in his intoxication, was wandering he knew not whither, he did not at first respond, but waited till it should be repeated.

It was repeated, this time with a considerable degree of force.

The young man approached the door, but feeling apprehensive that it might prove to be some unwelcome visitor, he paused before drawing the bolt, and called out, in a voice marked by a tremulous quaver, for he possessed but little physical courage, "Who are you that come here at such an unreasonable hour? Unless I know your name, I shall not let you in."

"Don't be alarmed, Jacob," was the reply. "It is only I, Lewis Rand. Open at once, for I come on business which must be quickly despatched."

The explanation was evidently satisfactory, for the scrivener in eager haste opened the door, and admitted his visitor. It was the younger of the two men upon whom the chance meeting with Helen and her father seemed to have produced an impression so powerful. Jacob, though well acquainted with him, was evidently surprised at his presence at an hour so unseasonable, for he ex-

claimed, in a tone of mingled surprise and deference, "You here, Mr. Rand, and at this time of night! It must be something important which has called you at an hour when most men are quietly sleeping in their beds."

"Yet you are up, Jacob, and at work, as I conjecture," said the visitor, pointing to the table on which the completed sheets were still lying.

"True," said the copyist, for this recalled to him the grounds of his discontent; "but I must work while others sleep, or accept a worse alternative. Sometimes I am tempted to give up the struggle. You have never known what a hard taskmaster poverty is."

"Perhaps not," returned the other; "but I can testify that the apprehension of poverty is not less formidable. However, I can perhaps lend you a helping hand, since the business on which I come, if successfully carried out, of which with your co-operation I have strong hopes, will prove so important to me that I shall be able to put a better face upon your affairs."

"Ah!" said the young man, with suddenly awakening interest; "what may it be? I will gladly give you all the aid in my power."

"Jacob," said his visitor, fixing his eyes steadily upon the scrivener, "you know there is an old maxim, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.' In other words, he who aims to be successful in his undertakings, must not scruple to employ the means best suited to advance his interests, even though they may involve the *possibility* of disaster to himself. Do you comprehend my meaning?"

"Not entirely. At least, I need to be informed

of the connection between what has just been said and the service you require at my hands."

"You shall presently know. But first promise me solemnly that what I may say, and any proposition which I may make to you to-night, shall forever remain a secret between us two."

The scrivener made the required promise, though his wonder was not a little excited by the extraordinary language and significant tone of his companion.

"I promise," he said. "You may proceed. I am ready."

"You are quite alone, I suppose," said Lewis, inquiringly. "There is no fear of eavesdroppers?"

"Not the least," replied Jacob, muttering to himself in an undertone, "Margaret must be fast asleep, I think. You need be under no apprehensions," he said, aloud. "We shall not be disturbed."

At this moment a small clock over the mantel struck two.

"Two o'clock!" exclaimed Lewis. "I had not supposed it so late. However, it is perhaps better, since we are the safer from interruption. You are somewhat acquainted," he continued, "with the position in which I stand to my uncle. For years I have been his constant companion, the slave of his whims and caprices, depriving myself of more agreeable and congenial society, in order to maintain my hold upon his affections, and secure the inheritance of his large property. No son would have done as much as I have. And now, when half my life is gone, and the realization of my hopes is apparently near at hand, an

incident has occurred, which threatens to disarrange all my plans, and defraud me of all but a tithe of that which I have so long looked upon as my sure inheritance."

"Surely, your uncle has no nearer relatives than yourself!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"That is what the world thinks, but they are deceived. My uncle has a son, and that son has a daughter. You see, therefore, that there is no lack of heirs. But you need an explanation.

"My father died when I was not quite five years of age. He was what is called a gay man, and spent freely what property he possessed, in extravagant living, and, lest that might not prove sufficient, he lost large sums at the gaming table. He died in an affair of honor which grew out of a dispute with one of his gambling acquaintances, leaving, as my inheritance, a few debts and nothing more. But for my uncle I should have been thrown upon the cold charities of the world. Fortunately for me, my uncle had none of his brother's vices, and had preserved his property intact, so that when need came, he was able to stretch forth a helping hand to his nephew.

"I can remember the day when I became an inmate of my uncle's household. I did not mourn much for my father, who seldom took any notice of me. Child as I was, I understood that his death, in consigning me to my uncle's care, had left me better off than before.

"I was nearly five, as I have said. My uncle had a son,—but one,—who was two years my senior. So my cousin Robert and I grew up together. Although we were treated in every respect alike, having the same tutors, the same

wardrobe, and even sharing the same room, I cannot remember a time when I did not hate him. There was nothing in his manner or his treatment of me that should lead to this, I acknowledge. He always treated me as a brother, and I suffered not a word or a gesture, not even a look, to indicate that I did not regard him in the same light. You will perhaps wonder at my aversion. It is easily explained. Although our treatment was the same, I soon learned that our prospects were very different. I soon became aware that he, as heir of his father's wealth, already considerable and rapidly increasing, was considered, by many, a far more important personage than myself. Notwithstanding my uncle's indulgence to me, I well knew that his pride, and a certain desire, inherited from his English ancestors, that his estate should be handed down entire from generation to generation, would receive anything beyond a moderate annuity. I could not brook my cousin's superior prospects, and determined to injure him with my uncle, if an opportunity offered.

"The opportunity came. My cousin fell in love with a beautiful girl, who, but for her poverty, would have attracted me also. This, however, proved an insuperable obstacle. I waited until the attachment had ripened into the most ardent affection, and then I made it known to my uncle with all the embellishments which I thought best calculated to arouse his irritation. The object of my cousin's attachment I described as an awkward country girl, without cultivation or refinement. It was a heavy blow to my uncle's pride, for he had nourished high hopes for his son, and

aspired to an alliance with a family as old and distinguished as his own. In the exasperation of the moment he summoned Robert to him, and peremptorily insisted on his at once giving up his attachment, stigmatizing the object of it in such terms as I had employed in describing her. My cousin's spirit was naturally aroused by such manifest injustice, and he refused to accede to his father's wishes. The discussion was a stormy one, and terminated as I hoped and believed it would. My cousin went forth from the house, disowned and disinherited, and I remained, filling his place as heir."

Jacob surveyed the speaker with a glance of admiration. He paid homage to a rascality which surpassed his own. He admired his craftiness and address, while his want of principle did not repel him.

"What became of your cousin?" inquired the scrivener, after a pause.

"He married and went out West. He possessed a small property inherited from his mother, and this enabled him to live in a humble way. I have heard little of him since, except that he had but one child, a daughter, who must now be not far from fourteen years old. This I learned from a letter of her father's which I intercepted."

"Has your uncle ever shown any symptoms of relenting?" asked Jacob.

"Two years ago he was very sick and it was thought he might die. During that sickness he referred so often to his son that I began to tremble for my prospective inheritance. I accordingly procured a notice of his death to be inserted in a Chicago paper, which I took care to

show my uncle. The authenticity of this he never dreamed of doubting, and I felt that my chances were as good as ever. But within the last week a fact has come to my knowledge which fills me with alarm."

The copyist looked up inquiringly.

"It is this," resumed Lewis. "Not only is my cousin living, but he is in this city. Furthermore my uncle has seen him, and but for my solemn assurance that he was mistaken, and my recalling to his recollection that Robert's death was well attested, he would have taken immediate measures for finding him out. If found, he would be at once reinstated in his birthright, and I should be reduced to the position of a humble dependent upon my uncle's bounty."

"But you have escaped the danger, and all is well again."

"By no means. Notwithstanding my representation, my uncle clings obstinately to the belief that either he or some child of his may be living, and only yesterday caused a new will to be drawn up, leaving the bulk of his estate to his son or his son's issue; and, failing these, to me. You will readily see how I stand affected by this. Of course in the event of my uncle's death a search will be immediately instituted for my cousin and his daughter, and being in the city they will probably be found."

"Your prospects are certainly not of the most encouraging character," said Jacob, after a pause. But, if I may venture to inquire, what assurance have you that such is the tenor of your uncle's will?"

"This," replied Rand, taking from a side-pocket

a piece of parchment tied with a blue ribbon, and leisurely unrolling it. Jacob watched his movements with curiosity.

"This," said he, bending a searching glance upon the scrivener, as if to test his fidelity; "this is my uncle's will."

The copyist could not repress a start of astonishment.

"The will!" he exclaimed. "How did you obtain possession of it?"

Lewis smiled.

"It was for my interest," he said briefly, "to learn the contents of this document, and I therefore made it my business to find it. You see that I have been successful. Read it."

The copyist drew the lamp nearer, and read it slowly and deliberately.

"Yes," said he, at length, looking up thoughtfully; "the contents are as you have described. May I ask what it is your intention to do about it, and what is the service I am to render you?"

"Can you not guess?" demanded his visitor, fixing his eyes meaningly upon him.

"No," returned the scrivener, a little uneasily; "I cannot."

"You are skilful with the pen, exceedingly skilful," resumed Lewis, meaningly. "Indeed, there has been a time when this accomplishment came near standing you in good stead, though it might also have turned to your harm."

Jacob winced.

"Ah!" pursued the visitor, "I see you have not forgotten a little occurrence in the past, when, but for my intervention, you might have

been convicted of—shall I say it?—forgery. You need not thank me. I never do anything without a motive. I don't believe in disinterestedness. The idea struck me even at that time that I might at some time have need of you."

"I am ready," said Jacob, submissively.

"That is well. What I want you to do is this. You must draw me up another will as nearly like this as possible, except that the whole estate shall be devised to me unconditionally. Well, man, what means that look of alarm?"

"It will be very dangerous to both of us," faltered the copyist.

"It will be a forgery, I admit," said Lewis, calmly; "but what is there in that word, *forgery*, which should so discompose *you?* Did it ever occur to you that the old charge might be renewed against you, when no intervention of mine will avail to save you?"

The copyist perceived the threat implied in those words, and hastened to propitiate his visitor, of whom he seemed to stand in wholesome fear.

"Nay," said he, submissively, "you know best the danger to both of us."

"And I tell you, Jacob, there is none at all. You are so cunning with the pen that you may easily defy detection, and for the rest, I will take the hazard."

"And what will be the recompense?" inquired the scrivener.

"Two hundred dollars as soon as the task is completed," was the prompt reply. "One thousand more when the success of the plan is assured."

Jacob's eyes sparkled. To him the bribe was a fortune.

"I consent," he said; "give me the will. I must study it for a time to become familiar with the handwriting."

He drew the lamp nearer and began to pore earnestly over the manuscript, occasionally scrawling with the pen which he held in his hand an imitation of some of the characters. It was a study for an artist,—those two men,—each determined upon a wrong deed for the sake of personal advantage. Lewis, with his cool, self-possessed manner, and the copyist, with his ignoble features and nervous eagerness, divided between the desire of gain and the fear of detection.

All this time a woman's eye might have been seen peering through a slightly open door, and regarding with a careful glance all that was passing. The two men were so intent upon the work before them that she escaped their notice.

"O ho," said she to herself, "there shall be a third in the secret which you fancy confined to yourselves. Who knows but it may turn out to my advantage, some day? I will stay and see the whole."

She drew back silently, and took her position just behind the door, where nothing that was said could escape her.

Meanwhile Jacob, having satisfied himself that he could imitate the handwriting of the will, commenced the task of copying. Half an hour elapsed during which both parties preserved strict silence. At the end of that time the copyist, with a satisfied air, handed Lewis the manu-

script he had completed. The latter compared the two with a critical eye. Everything, including the names of the witnesses, was wonderfully like. It was extremely difficult from the external appearance, to distinguish the original from the copy.

"You have done your work faithfully and well," said Lewis, with evident satisfaction, "and deserve great credit. You are wonderfully skilful with the pen."

The copyist rubbed his hands complacently.

"With this I think we need not fear detection. Here are the two hundred dollars which I promised you. The remainder is contingent on my getting the estate. I shall be faithful, in that event, to my part of the compact."

Jacob bowed.

"It must be very late," said Lewis, drawing out his watch. "I am sorry to have kept you up so late; but no doubt you feel paid. I must hasten back."

He buttoned his coat, and went out into the street. A smile lighted up his dark features as he speculated upon the probable success of his plans. He felt not even a momentary compunction as he thought of the means he had employed or the object he had in view.

Meanwhile those whom he was conspiring to defraud were sleeping tranquilly.

CHAPTER V.

THE PETTIFOGGER.

The legal profession numbers among its disciples a large class of honorable and high-minded men; and it also includes some needy adventurers well versed in the arts of pettifogging and chicanery, and willing, for a consideration, to throw over the most discreditable proceedings the mantle of the law, thus perverting, to the injury of the public, that which was intended for its principal safeguard.

Of this latter class was Richard Sharp, Barrister, whose name might have been read on the door of an exceedingly dirty little office not far from Wall Street. Being under the necessity of introducing my reader to some acquaintances and localities not altogether desirable I must trouble him to enter Mr. Sharp's office.

In the centre of the office stands a table covered with green baize. Scattered over it are diverse bundles tied with red tape, evidently intended to give the unsophisticated visitor the impression that Mr. Sharp's business is in a most flourishing condition. Nevertheless, since the novelist is permitted to see farther into the shams which he describes than is accorded to others less privileged, it may be remarked that these identical bundles have lain upon the table with no other alteration than an occasional change of arrangement, ever since the office was opened.

The enterprising proprietor of the bundles aforesaid is smoking a cigar, while reading the

Morning Herald, and occasionally glancing out of the window near by. His features would hardly justify the description of "beauty in repose," being deeply pitted with smallpox, which is not usually thought to improve the appearance. His nose is large and spreading at the base. His hair is deeply, darkly, beautifully red, bristling like a cat's fur when accidentally rubbed the wrong way. Add to these a long, scraggy neck, and the reader has a tolerable idea of Mr. Sharp as he sat in his office on the first day of October, 18—.

How long he would have sat thus, if uninterrupted, is uncertain. His meditations were broken in upon by a quick, imperative knock at the door. The effect upon Mr. Sharp was electrical. He sprang from his seat, tossed his cigar away, wheeled his chair round to the table, and drawing a blank legal form towards him, knit his brows and began to write as if life and death depended upon his haste. Meanwhile the visitor became impatient and rapped again, this time more imperatively.

"Come in," called Mr. Sharp, in a deep bass voice, not raising his eyes from the paper on which his pen was now scratching furiously. "Take a seat; shall be at leisure in a moment,—full of business, you know,—can't get a moment's rest."

When at length he found time to look up, he met the gaze of our recent acquaintance, Lewis Rand. The latter, who had penetration enough to see through the lawyer's artifice, smiled a little derisively.

"It must be a satisfaction to you," he said,

rather dryly, "to find your services in such request."

"Why, yes, ahem! yes," said the lawyer, passing his fingers through his bristling locks. "It *is* a satisfaction as you say, though I confess," he continued, with a dashing effrontery quite refreshing to contemplate, "that sometimes when my labors are protracted far into the night, I feel that business has its pains as well as pleasures, and cannot help wishing that——"

"That you had a partner to relieve you of a portion of your toils, you doubtless mean to say," interrupted Lewis, with a quizzical smile; for he was quite aware that Mr. Sharp meant no such thing. "In that case I know the very man for you; a young man just entered at the bar, very promising, and bidding fair to distinguish himself in his profession. I should be happy to serve both you and him. When shall I introduce him?"

"Why," said Sharp, in some embarrassment, for he knew to his cost that his business was quite too limited to support himself, much less a partner. "Why you see, although my business is, as I said, very driving, I do not at present think of taking a partner. The fact is, I never enjoy myself more than when I am hard at work. It is an idiosyncrasy of mine, if I may so express myself."

And Mr. Sharp looked up, thinking he had made a very clever evasion.

"When I do conclude to take a partner, which the increase of my business may at some time render absolutely necessary," he added, graciously inclining his head, "I will certainly

think of your friend. Your recommendation will be a sufficient guarantee of his ability."

"I feel deeply indebted to you for the confidence you express in my judgment," said Lewis, bowing, "particularly as I am a perfect stranger to you. Such instances are rarely met with in a world like ours."

Mr. Sharp was not quite sure whether his visitor was not secretly bantering him. He thought it best, however, to construe his meaning literally.

"I am not usually hasty in bestowing my confidence, Mr.—your name escaped me."

"I think I have not mentioned it."

"O ho, ahem! perhaps not," continued Mr. Sharp, finding his little artifice to obtain his visitor's name ineffectual, "but as I was about to say, I seldom give my confidence without good reason. I am—I may say—somewhat skilled in physiognomy, and a cursory examination of the features is sufficient, in ordinary cases, to enable me to form an opinion of a person."

Mr. Sharp was fertile in expedients, and had an abundant share of self-possession.

"Perhaps we had better proceed to business," said Lewis, abruptly.

"Oh, by all means, sir, by all means!" returned Mr. Sharp, assuming a brisk tone at the prospect of a client. "As I before remarked, I never feel more completely in my element than when immersed in business. It is an——"

"If you will give me your attention for a few minutes," pursued Lewis, unceremoniously interrupting him, "I will endeavor to explain the nature of the service I require."

Mr. Sharp bent forward, and assumed an attitude of the most earnest attention. He nodded slightly, and screwed up his eyes, as if to intimate that he was about to concentrate all his mental energies upon the matter in hand.

"You must know," said Lewis, slowly, "that there are two persons living in this city whose presence, in what way it is needless to specify, conflict very seriously with my interests. It is my wish to bring some motive to bear upon them, which shall lead to their departure from the city."

"I understand," nodded Mr. Sharp, with an air of profound wisdom. "Go on, my good sir."

"One difficulty, however, meets me at the outset," continued Lewis; "I do not know in what part of the city the two persons——"

"Aforesaid," prompted Mr. Sharp, nodding sagaciously.

"Live," concluded Lewis, not heeding the interpolation; "nor have I any definite clew by which to find them."

"Can you describe these persons to me so that I may be able to identify them?"

"That is not easy, since one of them I have never seen but once, and the other but once in fifteen years."

Mr. Sharp looked a little puzzled.

"I can, however, tell you this much. One is a man of about forty, who appears somewhat older. The other, his daughter, is a girl of fourteen, or thereabouts. The former is a little absent in manner, or was formerly so; the little girl, I should judge, is attractive in her personal appearance."

"When did you last meet them?" inquired the lawyer.

"One evening last week."

"And where?"

"They were then leaning against the railing on the west side of the Park."

"Can you tell at what hour?"

"About six."

"Then it is quite possible that they may be found at the same place some evening, at or near this hour. Very probably they are in the habit of taking a walk at that time and in that direction. We are all creatures of habit, and are apt to stick to the ruts we have made. Have you no other clue by which I may be guided? It is quite likely that there are others to whom the description you have given will apply. When you saw them, in what manner were they dressed?"

"I had but a brief glimpse, and do not feel altogether sure. The father is as tall as yourself. I can tell you the girl's name also; it is Helen."

"And her father's?"

"I could tell you his real name, but as I have every reason to believe that he has dropped it and assumed another, it will, perhaps, be unnecessary. His christian name is Robert."

"The first step, then," said Mr. Sharp, reflectively, "is, of course, to find these persons. This will be a matter of some difficulty, and may require considerable time. I do not doubt, however, that I shall ultimately be able to accomplish it. May I inquire whether they are in good circumstances pecuniarily?"

"Probably not. I presume their means are quite limited."

"So much the better."

"For what reason?" inquired Lewis, in some curiosity.

"Simply this. You tell me you are desirous of removing them from the city; if they are poor it will be much easier to offer an inducement likely to weigh with them, than if they were in prosperous circumstances."

"There is something in that, I admit, but if Robert is as proud as he used to be in days gone by, such an attempt would avail but little. However, there is no occasion to consider what further steps are to be taken, till we have actually found them. That must be our first care."

"In that I shall endeavor to serve you. How and where shall I communicate with you?"

"I shall call upon you frequently. There may, however, be occasions when it will be needful to communicate with me without delay. In such an event, a note directed to L. Thornton, Box 1228, will reach me."

Mr. Sharp noted this address on a slip of paper, and bowed his client out.

There will of course be no difficulty in divining why Lewis considered it detrimental to his interests that Helen and her father should remain in the city. He was in constant alarm lest some accident should bring together the father and son, who had for so long a time been separated from each other. He was playing for a large stake, and was not fastidious as to the means employed, provided they insured his success. His visit to the copyist, and the bold forgery per-

petrated with his assistance, afforded sufficient evidence of this. He was disposed, however, to use very prudent precaution. Why he was induced to call in the co-operation of a needy, and well-nigh briefless lawyer like Mr. Sharp, may be gathered from the soliloquy in which he indulged on leaving the office of the worthy attorney.

"There's a great deal of humbug about that fellow," he said to himself, "but he is quick-witted and unscrupulous—two qualities which adapt him to my service. Again, he is poor, and not overburdened with business, so that he will be the more likely to attach himself to my interests. Things seem to be in a fair train. It is fortunate that my cousin does not know of his father's removal to this city; he doubtless imagines him a hundred miles away. It is indispensable that I should not show myself in this business, but leave everything to Sharp. When the property is mine, I can bid my cousin defiance."

The wily nephew hastened to the bedside of his uncle, where, with feigned solicitude, he inquired after his health. It is well for our happiness that we cannot always read the hearts of those about us. How hollow and empty would then seem some of the courtesies of life!

CHAPTER VI.

SO FAR, SO GOOD.

Lewis Rand had displayed his usual sagacity in selecting Mr. Sharp as his agent in the affair which now occupied so large a share of his atten-

tion. The worthy attorney was not particularly scrupulous, and the thought that he was lending his aid to defraud, did not have the least effect in disturbing Mr. Sharp's tranquillity. Indeed, he considered it a stroke of remarkably good luck that he should have secured so promising a client, through whom his rather limited income was likely to receive so important an accession. To do him justice he intended to devote his best exertions to the case now in his hands, and insure the success of his client if it could in any manner be compassed.

For several evenings subsequent to the interview described in the last chapter, Mr. Sharp found it convenient to walk for an hour or more towards the close of the afternoon. Singularly enough he never varied his promenade, always selecting the neighborhood of the Park. It was his custom to walk slowly up and down, attentively scanning the different groups that passed under his eye. But among the thousands who passed him, he could for some time discover none that resembled the description furnished by his client.

It chanced that Helen and her father had suspended their walks for a few days, in consequence of a slight indisposition on the part of the latter. This, however, Mr. Sharp could not be expected to know. His hopes of ultimate success diminished, and although he continued his daily walks, he began to be apprehensive that they would result in nothing. But one evening as he was glancing restlessly about him, his eye fell upon a plainly-dressed man, above the middle height, but stooping, walking hand in hand with

a young girl. Their ages seemed to correspond with those given by Lewis Rand.

The thought flashed upon Mr. Sharp that these might be the two persons of whom he was in search. Judging that they might let fall something in their conversation which would decide the matter, he followed closely behind them. But unluckily for the lawyer's purpose, Mr. Ford was in one of his not uncommon fits of abstraction, and maintained an unbroken silence.

Mr. Sharp pondered, and set his wits to work to devise some method by which he could gain the information he desired. At length it occurred to him that the little girl's name was Helen, and this might help to identify her.

After a while Helen and her father slackened their pace. Mr. Sharp took up a position behind them. Assuming an air of unconcern, he pronounced, in a low tone, the word "Helen," at the same time slipping dexterously behind an old gentleman of somewhat aldermanic proportions who had just come up.

On hearing her name pronounced, Helen turned quickly around as Mr. Sharp had anticipated. Her eyes rested on the grave features of the respectable old gentleman before alluded to. He was not even looking at her. Evidently it could not be he. She did not observe the somewhat flashily attired gentleman behind, whose red locks contrasted so vividly with the grayish white hat somewhat jauntily perched on the side of his head. Supposing, therefore, that her ears must have deceived her, she turned away. Her sudden movement, however, had not been unobserved by the watchful eyes of the lawyer.

"That must be she," he said to himself. "She would scarcely have turned round so quickly on hearing any other name than her own. That's the first link in the chain, Sharp. You've got a little to build upon now. Now we'll see how well you will succeed in following it up."

Mr. Sharp was in the habit of apostrophizing himself in such familiar terms as "old fellow," and would indulge in commendations, or otherwise, of his conduct, as if of a second person.

When Helen and her father left the spot, they were followed at a little distance by the lawyer, whose object of course, was to ascertain where they lived. His curiosity was gratified. Helen entered Mother Morton's boarding-house, quite unconscious that she had been followed. A rapid glance satisfied Mr. Sharp of the name and number which were at once transferred to his notebook.

"So far, so good," thought he, with inward satisfaction. "I must inform my client forthwith, and then we can decide upon further steps."

So elated was Mr. Sharp by the discovery that he had made, that he stepped into a saloon on Broadway, and indulged in potations so very generous, that he narrowly escaped arrest by a policeman on the way home.

Helen, meanwhile, was becoming daily more and more troubled in mind. Her father was so wrapped up in his model that he could think of nothing else. To her, accordingly, had been committed the common purse, and upon her had devolved the duty of providing for their daily wants, as well as discharging the rent which was due once in four weeks. She therefore knew

more of their pecuniary condition than her father. She had been repeatedly alarmed at the rapid diminution of the funds placed in her hands, and this, notwithstanding she exercised the strictest economy in all their expenses. For some time, as we have seen, she had eked out their scanty means by working for the slop-shops. Now, however, there was a lull in the clothing business, and this resource was temporarily cut off. How heavily upon the young and inexperienced falls the burden of pecuniary trouble! Helen saw with a feeling of dismay that a few weeks would find their means exhausted. What would become of them then, she did not dare to think. If only her father's invention could be completed before that time, she thought, in her simplicity, that all would be well. Of the long years before even a successful invention can be made profitable, she knew nothing. She trusted implicitly to her father's confident assurances, and never doubted that some time they would become rich through his discovery. This consideration, however, did not afford her present relief. Although her father labored assiduously, it did not appear to her unpractised eye that he was any nearer the end than he had been six months before. Confident as she was of his final success, the question how they should live in the mean time assumed grave importance, and occasioned her not a little perplexity.

If Helen could have shared her doubts and anxieties with some one who might have sympathized with her, she would have felt less troubled. But there seemed to be no one to whom she could speak freely. She was only too anxious

to keep it from her father, who, she felt instinctively, could give her little or no assistance. She thought of speaking to Mrs. Morton, but the fear lest, if she should acknowledge her poverty, the latter might be unwilling to allow them to retain their room any longer, restrained her.

We have before mentioned the humble seamstress, Martha Grey, who occupied the room beneath that of Mr. Ford. Though plain in appearance, and of quiet demeanor, Helen had been attracted by the expression of goodness which lighted up her face. Sometimes, when her father seemed wholly immersed in his labors, she would steal down stairs and spend a quiet hour in Martha's company.

On one of these occasions Martha had a visitor. Although introduced as a cousin, one could scarcely imagine a greater contrast than existed between her and Martha. Her dress was more showy than tasteful, and evidently occupied a large share of her attention. She was employed in a millinery establishment where she earned good wages,—twice as much as Martha,—but saved nothing, expending everything upon personal adornment. She lacked entirely the refinement and quiet dignity of her cousin. In spite of her humble circumstances, Martha would have been recognized by any one possessing discernment as a lady. Her cousin, in spite of her dress, was never in any danger of being mistaken for one. Her manner towards Martha, however, was a patronizing one, and she evidently considered herself as occupying a much higher position than the seamstress.

"I am astonished, Martha," said she, glancing

contemptuously at the plain room, and plainer furniture, "that you should be willing to live in such a hole. I believe if I was cooped up here I should die of loneliness in less than a week."

"I find it very comfortable," said Martha, composedly.

"Yes, I suppose it will do. It will keep out the rain and wind, and is better than nothing, of course. But I want something better than that."

"I am very well contented," said Martha, "and even if I were not, I could afford no better."

"Do you stay here all the time? Don't you ever go to concerts or the theatre?"

"No."

"What a humdrum life you must lead! It's Wednesday afternoon. Suppose we go to the theatre. There's going to be a splendid play."

Martha hesitated.

There is so little to excite or interest in the monotonous life of a hard-working seamstress, that she really longed to throw aside the needle, and accept her cousin's invitation.

"I should like to go," she said at length, "but I am afraid I ought not to spend either the time or the money."

"Then I'll make you a fair offer. If you'll spare the time, I'll spare the money. I'll buy the tickets. Won't you go, too?" she continued, turning to Helen. "I'll pay for you."

Helen looked at Martha who nodded kindly, and said, "Did you ever go to the theatre, Helen?"

"No, Martha."

"Then you had better come. You can come back with me."

"Thank you," said Helen. "I will see if father needs me."

She hastened up-stairs, but found that her father, absorbed in his engrossing employment, had not even been aware of her absence.

"Do you think you can spare me for two or three hours, papa?" she asked. "I have been invited to go out."

She had to repeat the question before her father comprehended.

"Go, by all means, my dear child," he answered. "I am afraid you confine yourself too much on my account."

Helen was soon ready. She went out with Martha Grey and her cousin, and a few minutes found them standing before a large building with a spacious entrance.

"This is the theatre," said Martha, addressing herself to Helen.

Helen little thought of the consequences that were to follow this—her first entrance within the walls of a theatre.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW TALENT.

Seated in the theatre, Helen looked about her in bewilderment. She had never been within the walls of a theatre. In the street the sun shone brightly. Here the sun was rigorously excluded, and gas took its place. It seemed to the unsophisticated child like a sudden leap from noon to night. She could hear the rumbling of vehicles in the streets, but it appeared to her, somehow,

as if they were far away, and that she had come into a different world. She wondered what there was behind that broad green curtain in front, and why the lights should be arranged so oddly at the foot of it.

"Lor', child, that's the stage," was the lucid explanation of Martha's cousin, to whom she applied for information. "Haven't you ever been to the theatre before?"

"No, never," said Helen.

The cousin looked at her with some curiosity, as if there must be something out of the common way about a person who had never been to the theatre, and expressed her decided conviction that Helen's education had been shockingly neglected.

"Why," said she, "before I was half as high as you, I had been to the theatre ever so many times."

She spoke with so much complacency that Helen imagined she must be a very superior person, and possessed great knowledge of the world.

While these and other thoughts were passing through her mind, the bell rang twice, and then the curtain rose.

Helen nearly uttered an exclamation of surprise, so unprepared was she for the spectacle which was presented to her dazzled gaze. The play was a fairy extravaganza, which depended for its success chiefly upon scenery and stage effect. In the first scene was represented the palace of the Queen of the fairies, crowning the summit of a hill, rising in the centre of a beautiful island. Above floated fleecy clouds, from a break in which streamed the sunshine, lending its glory to the scene.

In the foreground stood a circle of children about Helen's age or younger, who figured as sylphs. With united voices they sang a song in honor of the Queen of the fairies, who directly afterwards was seen floating through the air above the stage, arrayed in such style as seemed befitting her illustrious rank.

So complete was the illusion to Helen, that she gazed with suspended breath and a feeling, half of awe, as if the scene she looked upon was really one of enchantment.

"Is she really a fairy?" she asked of Martha's cousin.

"No, child, of course not. It's Henrietta Blake. I've seen her in the street many a time. Once I was introduced to her."

"What a beautiful creature she must be!" said Helen, admiringly.

"Beautiful!" repeated the cousin, with some disdain. "For my part, I don't think she's anything to boast of in that line. Just notice what a poor complexion she has. You'd see it if it wasn't for the paint. You wouldn't have thought her very fairy-like if you had seen her in at Taylor's the other evening, eating oysters."

Helen could scarcely believe her ears. It seemed to be almost like sacrilege to associate such a gross idea with the ethereal being that floated before her in all the majestic beauty of a fairy queen. It took from the scene before her something of the charm with which her fancy had invested it. Still it was with a feeling of intense enjoyment that she followed the play to its conclusion, watching scene after scene pass before her, and the music was truly enchanting.

At length the play was finished, and the curtain dropped. This, however, did not conclude the performance. After a short pause the curtain rose once more, and a young girl came forward and sang the well-known little Scotch song, "Comin' Thro' the Rye." It was sung correctly and in good taste, but with no remarkable display of power. Still it was vociferously encored, and, on its repetition, was applauded warmly.

There was an afterpiece, but, as it was already late in the afternoon, Martha and her cousin decided not to remain.

"Well, how did you like it?" asked the cousin, patronizingly.

"Oh, it was beautiful!" exclaimed Helen, enthusiastically. "I am so much obliged to you for taking me."

"They have better plays sometimes," returned the cousin, with an air of superior knowledge of the world. "I didn't think much of the acting to-day, for my part. I'll take you again some time when they've got something else."

Even after she was fairly in the street, Helen found it difficult to throw off the illusion of the stage. She could still see in imagination the gorgeous spectacle, the splendid fairy palace, the graceful sylphs, and the queen in her regal magnificence. She was so entirely under the dominion of fancy that to her the outer world seemed unreal, and that which she had seen, the real. She walked on, heeding little, till she was suddenly roused from her reverie in a very forcible manner, by coming in collision with some person. It proved to be a very fat old lady, who was walking, or rather waddling, slowly along the side-

walk, with her head thrown back. At the unexpected collision, she screamed, and gasped for breath, eyeing Helen, meanwhile, with no very amiable expression of countenance.

"You've just about beaten the breath out of my body, you young trollop. Where was you brought up, I'd like to know, not to have any better manners?"

"I hope you'll excuse me," said Helen, humbly, somewhat ashamed of her preoccupation. "I didn't mean to run against you."

"Don't tell me," said the irritated old lady. "You did it a purpose. I know you did."

"She might as well say you ran into her on purpose," retorted Martha's cousin.

"I didn't speak to you, ma'am," said the exasperated old lady. "It's my belief that you're all in league together, and I've a great mind to have you given in charge of the police."

"Indeed!" said the cousin, ironically.

"Come away," said Martha, in a low voice. "Don't let us have a scene here."

As quickly as possible they escaped from the irate old lady. She stood panting for breath, and glaring at them over the rims of her glasses, which had been accidentally misplaced. This encounter, ludicrous as it was, served to bring Helen back from the ideal world to the real, and without any further adventures she reached home.

It was already time to prepare their frugal meal. She found her father as busily occupied as ever. She was glad of this, for it showed that her presence had not been missed.

The next day Martha Grey was at work harder

than ever. She felt that she must make up by extra exertion for the unwonted relaxation of the day before.

"What are you thinking of, Martha?" asked Helen, playfully, as she stole in unperceived, and placed her hands over the eyes of the seamstress. "Come, tell me before I take my hands away."

"I was thinking," said Martha, "that I should like to hear once more the song that was sung at the theatre yesterday."

"You enjoyed it, then?"

"Very much."

"Shall I sing it to you?" asked Helen, quietly.

"You, Helen?" asked Martha, lifting up her eyes in astonishment. "Can you sing? I never heard you."

"I do not sing very often," said Helen, sadly. "My mother taught me, and whenever I sing it brings up thoughts of her."

"I should like very much to hear you sing, Helen," said Martha; "but do not do it if it will make you sad."

"Never mind, Martha. I will sing, if it will give you pleasure."

Helen commenced the song, and sang it to the end in a voice of remarkable richness and power. She was gifted with a voice of extraordinary flexibility and compass, whose natural power had evidently been improved by cultivation. Martha, who, though no singer herself, was very fond of listening to music, and could judge when it had merit, listened with unaffected astonishment and delight. She felt that she had never heard a voice of equal sweetness and power.

"You have a beautiful voice," she said, when

Helen had finished the song. "You sang it much better than it was sung at the theatre yesterday. Some day you may become a great singer."

"Do you really think so?" asked Helen, her eyes sparkling with delight. "I am very glad."

Martha looked up in some surprise, not understanding why it was that Helen felt so much pleased. But a new thought had come to the child.

"Is there anything else you would like to hear?" she asked.

"I should like to hear 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

It was a song which Helen had often sung, and to which she could do full justice. It was not difficult to account for the feeling which led Martha Grey to make choice of this song. She was one of a large family, who had never known sorrow or separation till the death of her parents, following each other in quick succession, turned them all adrift upon the world.

As the song proceeded, Martha called up in fancy the humble farm-house among the New Hampshire hills, with its comfortable barn and well-tilled acres around it. She recalled the broad, low kitchen, with its large fireplace and blazing back-log, around which the family was wont to gather in the cheerful winter evenings. She recalled her little sister Ruth, who was about the age of Helen when their home was broken up, but whom she had not seen since, Ruth having been placed in the family of an uncle. She recalled her happy school-days, her school companions, and, above all, her father and mother, who had never been otherwise than kind to her, and then looked about the small and desolate

room which she now called home. She could not help contrasting her present lonely position with what it had been when she was at home in the midst of her family, and as the last strain died away upon Helen's lips, she burst into tears.

Helen looked up in surprise at this unwonted display of emotion on the part of one, usually so quiet and composed as Martha Grey.

"Don't mind me, Helen," said Martha, through her tears. "It came over me, and I couldn't help it. Some time, perhaps, I will tell you why it is that that song always makes me shed tears."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY AND TRINITY CHURCH.

It was Sunday morning. To thousands of frames, wearied by exhausting labors, it brought the benediction of rest. To thousands of throbbing brains it brought grateful relaxation. The great business thoroughfares wear a Sunday look. The shops are closed, and no longer hold out, through showily arranged windows, invitations to enter. The bells in a hundred steeples ring out in many voices the summons to worship.

Helen tapped gently at Martha's door.

"Where do you attend church?" she inquired.

"I was just going to call for you, Helen," said the seamstress, "to ask if you and your father wouldn't like to attend Trinity Church with me."

Helen hesitated a little.

"That is the great church at the lower end of Broadway, isn't it?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"I thought it might be a fashionable church. Father and I have been to one or two of the great churches, where the sexton didn't seem to care about giving us seats, but finally put us away back where we found it difficult to hear the service."

"I have had the same experience more than once," said Martha; "but we shall have no such trouble at Trinity. Though one of the finest churches in the city, it is free to all, and the poor are as welcome as the rich."

"Then I shall be glad to go, and so will papa. Wait a moment, and I will tell him."

They were soon in the street, mingling with the well-dressed crowds, wending their way to their respective houses of worship.

"Sunday was always pleasant to me," said Martha, "even as a child. I remember the plain old meeting-house, where we all sat in square, high-backed pews, listening to the good old minister who is gone now to his rest and his reward. There have been great changes since then," and she sighed sadly.

A short walk brought them to the church portals. They were early, and obtained excellent seats. The organist was already playing. Helen's face lit with pleasure, for she had never before heard so fine an instrument or so skilful a player. Exquisitely fitted by nature for receiving musical impressions, she felt her soul uplifted by the grandeur of the music, and her heart penetrated by its sweetness. Now there was a thunderous clang as if the organist were seeking to evoke from the instrument a fitting

tribute to the majesty and power of the Creator. It seemed as if hosts of angels were clashing their cymbals, and singing God's high praise. Now a delicate rill of silver-voiced melody trickled forth, clear and sweet, interpreting the unfathomable love wherewith God loves his children, even the lowliest.

Helen listened as one entranced, and when the last strain died away, and the organ was still, she turned towards Martha, and whispered, for she could not keep silence, "It lifts me up. It almost seems as if I were heaven."

Unconsciously Helen expressed the same feeling which Milton has embodied in fitting lines,—

> "But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious cloisters pale,
> And love the high embowered roof
> With antique pillars massy proof,
> And storied windows richly dight
> Casting a dim religious light;
> There let the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced choir below
> In service high and anthem clear,
> As may with sweetness through mine ear
> Dissolve me into ecstasies
> And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

It is a mistake to suppose that the plainest and cheapest churches are good enough for the poor. Europe is far more democratic in matters of religion than America. In the great continental cathedrals I have more than once felt inexpressibly touched to behold at my side some child of poverty and misfortune bending a reverent gaze upon some imaged saint. I have pictured to myself his probable home in some filthy court or dingy alley, with the light of heaven shut out, dark, forbidding and noisome, and rejoiced to

think that it was his privilege to pass from such a scene into the splendors that fitly adorn the house of God. It is something to shed a ray of sunlight upon the life of a poor man—to gratify his taste, mortified by the gloomy surroundings of his daily life, to nourish the little flower of sentiment struggling out of the rubbish that has well-nigh choked out his æsthetic nature, and help him to feel that life has a beautiful side, from which he is not utterly shut out.

So Helen and the poor seamstress, confined through the week in poor and unattractive chambers, felt a quiet satisfaction in the grand architectural proportions and solemn beauty of the great church in which they felt themselves welcome guests. They derived new strength for the plain and humble duties of every day in the thought that one day in seven they could escape into a loftier atmosphere, and feel God's presence nearer.

Occasionally, as the service proceeded, Helen stole a glance at her father, who sat beside her. His face wore a look of calm enjoyment and intelligent appreciation.

As he sat with his clasped hands resting on his knees, and his eyes fixed upon the preacher, the vanished years returned, and beside him there sat once more the fair young bride, whose pure and saintly image lived a hallowed remembrance in the heart of father and daughter alike.

When the service closed, he did not change his position, till Helen, touching him gently, said, "It is time to go, papa."

"We will come again next Sunday, Helen," he said.

"Yes, papa."

They walked back slowly and thoughtfully to their humble homes, speaking little, but each more happy and peaceful for the hour passed in the great church whose lofty spire seemed ever pointing upwards to that God in whose service it was reared.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAWYER'S PROGRESS.

The day after his meeting with Helen and her father, the worthy attorney, Mr. Sharp, took his way leisurely to the boarding-house of Mrs. Morton. Although the object of his visit was clearly defined to his own mind, he scarcely knew in what manner he might best attain it. But Mr. Sharp was not a man to be abashed or daunted by small difficulties. Trusting, therefore, to what chance and the inspiration of the moment might suggest, he mounted the steps and rang the bell.

"Mrs. Morton, I presume," he remarked, with great affability, as that lady opened the door in person.

"You are quite right, sir."

"I believe," he remarked with suavity, "that I am correct in the supposition that you take boarders."

"I wonder what he's aiming at," thought Mother Morton, glancing with something of suspicion at the white hat set jauntily on one side of his head. "I hope he won't apply for board. I am always suspicious of those who are so smooth-tongued."

"Yes, sir," she said aloud, "I do take boarders, but I am full now."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Sharp, with a benignant smile, "I am delighted to hear of your prosperity. I was not, however, thinking of making an application for board in my own behalf, though I should undoubtedly esteem it a high privilege to be an inmate of a boarding-house which I am confident is so admirably conducted. Will you have the goodness to tell me whether you have a boarder or lodger named Dupont?"

It is scarcely necessary to explain that this inquiry was employed by Mr. Sharp as a plausible method of accounting for his calling, and to pave the way for something else. He had no particular choice in the name, but thought Dupont would be as uncommon as any.

"Yes," was the unexpected reply of Mrs. Morton, "we have a lodger of that name. I believe he is in. Will you step in and see him, sir?"

Unprepared for this answer, Mr. Sharp was for the moment undecided how to act. Being sufficiently quick-witted, however, he soon devised a way to extricate himself from his embarrassment.

"Poor man!" said he with a gentle sigh; he's much to be pitied."

"Pitied!" echoed the landlady, opening wide her eyes in astonishment. "Why?"

"To a sensitive mind," continued Mr. Sharp, in a tone of mild pathos, "bodily deformity must be a great drawback to one's comfort and happiness."

"Deformity!" repeated the landlady in increased surprise.

"Yes, Mr. Dupont is a humpback, is he not?"

"A humpback!" returned Mrs. Morton, in a tone of some asperity. "You are quite mistaken, sir; I have no humpback among my boarders."

"Then it cannot be the man I mean," said the lawyer, rejoiced to have got out of the scrape so cleverly. "I beg ten thousand pardons for having put you to so much trouble."

"No trouble, sir," was the civil reply.

Mrs. Morton held the door, wondering why the visitor still remained, now that his errand was accomplished. The lawyer's purpose, however, still remained to be effected. He was even now cudgeling his brains to devise a method of reaching it.

"A moment more," he said, with suavity. "I think, as I passed last evening, that I saw a little girl enter with an elderly gentleman."

"Helen Ford?"

"Oh, yes. She boards with you, does she not?"

"Helen and her father have a room up stairs. They board themselves. I only lodge them."

"Pardon my curiosity, but I have an object in view. What is her father's occupation?"

"He is busy about some invention, and has been ever since he came here. A flying machine, I believe."

"Ah, yes," said the lawyer, to whom this was all new. "It is as I supposed. Can I see them? I picked up a small purse," he added, by way of explanation, "just after they passed me in the street, and I thought it not unlikely that the young lady might have dropped it."

"Certainly," said the landlady, somewhat more favorably disposed to Mr. Sharp, in consequence

of this evidence of his integrity. "Their room is on the fourth floor, at the head of the stairs. Perhaps I had better go up and show you."

"Oh, by no means, madam, by no means," said the lawyer, politely. "I know the value of your time, and would on no account subject you to so much unnecessary trouble. I shall easily find it from your directions."

Helen was looking out of the window, and her father was busied as usual, when a low tap was heard at the door.

Supposing it was Martha, who, in fact, with the exception of the landlady, was her only visitor, she cried "Come in," and then creeping softly to the door, jumped out playfully upon the one who entered. Her dismay may readily be conceived when, instead of the quiet seamstress, she found that she had narrowly escaped jumping into the arms of a tall man with a white hat.

"I am very sorry,—I did not know,—I thought it was Martha," she faltered, in great confusion, her cheeks dyed with blushes.

"Don't apologize, I beg of you," said the stranger, courteously. "It is I, on the contrary, who should apologize for intruding upon you, and," he added, glancing to the corner of the room, "upon your respected parent. I am not mistaken," he added, inquiringly, "in supposing him to be your father?"

"No, sir," said Helen, who, without understanding why, felt a little ill at ease from the elaborate politeness of her visitor.

"But I have not yet disclosed the motive of my visit. I chanced to be walking behind you

and your father yesterday in the afternoon. You walked out at that time?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought I could not be mistaken. There are some countenances, my dear young lady, that we are not likely to forget."

Helen, unused as she was to flattery, did not understand that this was meant for a compliment. Therefore it quite failed of its effect. Perhaps this was quite as well, since, if understood, it would have confused rather than pleased her. She was too deficient in vanity to have felt flattered by a compliment from a stranger. Yet no one was more desirous of winning the approval of those whose friendship she valued. Helen was, in short, a truthful, unsophisticated child, perfectly transparent and straightforward, and imagined that others were equally so. So she only waited patiently for Mr. Sharp to announce the object of his call.

"Afterwards I discovered this purse on the sidewalk," continued the lawyer, displaying his own purse. "As you and your father had just passed, I conjectured that one or the other of you must have dropped it. I have, accordingly, called this morning to ascertain if I am correct in my supposition, and if so, to return the purse."

"No," said Helen, shaking her head. "It cannot be ours."

"Then I must seek farther for the owner. I beg you will pardon me for this intrusion."

Helen said, rather awkwardly, that it was of no consequence.

"May I inquire," said Mr. Sharp, as if the idea suddenly struck him, "whether your father is

not an inventor? I think I was told so by the very respectable lady down-stairs."

"Yes," said Helen, more at her ease. "Papa has been busy a great while about his invention. It requires a great deal of time and patience."

"Indeed! Would it be taking too great a liberty to inquire the nature of the proposed invention?"

"It is a flying machine," said Helen. "Some people laugh at it," she added, a little hurriedly. "It seems strange to them because they have never thought much about it."

"Let them laugh," said Mr. Sharp, with warmth. "Let them laugh, my dear young lady," he repeated in a tone of profound sympathy. "It is the way of the world. There has never been any great discovery or invention, from the earliest ages to the present time, that has not encountered ridicule. Wait till success crowns your father's exertions, and then you will see how all will be changed."

"So papa thinks," said Helen, quite grateful to the lawyer for his words of encouragement; "and it is that which makes him labor so patiently."

"Undoubtedly. Would it be too great a liberty to ask permission to examine your father's invention. It is a subject in which I feel a very deep interest. Indeed, I may say that I am something of an inventor myself."

Poor confiding Helen! How could she imagine that these words of sympathy covered an unblushing falsehood?

"Papa will be very glad to show it to you," she said. Then to her father: "Papa, this gentleman would like to examine your model."

"Certainly," said Mr. Ford, courteously.

This was a subject on which, despite his taciturnity, he could talk fluently. Mr. Sharp listened with an appearance of profound attention, occasionally asking a question, and remarking modestly that he had once entered upon a similar train of investigation, but that the imperative claims of business had brought it to an abrupt termination.

"I have not by any means," he concluded, "lost my interest in scientific matters; and it would afford me great pleasure if you will permit me occasionally to look in upon you and note your progress. I dare not hope that I could offer any suggestions likely to be of service to one so far my superior in scientific attainments, but should it be in my power to aid you in any way, you can count on me with confidence."

Mr. Ford felt flattered, as was but natural, by this evidence of interest in his pursuits, and cordially invited Mr. Sharp to call whenever he found it convenient.

"Well, Sharp," said that gentleman, apostrophizing himself, as he made his way downstairs, "you've done well, old fellow, though at one time I trembled for you. You've flattered your way into the good graces of that chimerical old fool, and now you are in a fair way to accomplish something more, if needful."

The next day found him closeted with Lewis Rand, from whom he received instructions as to his future course.

CHAPTER X.

NEW PROJECTS.

Helen had been long and anxiously considering in what manner she could employ herself so as to earn a sufficient amount to defray the expenses of living. Every day the little stock of money remaining in her purse became less. They lived very frugally, but there was the rent, and two persons cannot live on air. So the little hoard diminished, and five dollars were now all that remained to Helen. Five dollars! it might keep them ten days, but certainly would not last longer, economize as they might. From her father Helen could hope for no present assistance. He was always at work, but his labor, however well it might be compensated in the future, brought in no money now. And for money there would soon be pressing occasion. Helen grew very uneasy at the thought that they might be turned penniless into the street. Hitherto they had never been without money. The five dollars that remained was the last instalment of a small property left her father by his mother.

One morning Helen sat at the table, leaning her head upon her hand, plunged in anxious thought. At first she could think of no possible resource. But when everything looks dark, and all paths seem closed to us, suddenly from out the thick darkness there sometimes streams a ray of hope to cheer and sustain the sinking heart.

So it was in the present case.

In her humility, Helen had never dreamed

that she possessed extraordinary musical powers, and it was only through the warm commendation of Martha Grey that this fact became known to her. Why should she not employ these in her father's service? At the theatre a singer, but little older than herself, and as Martha declared inferior in talent, had won the popular applause. Why should not she gain employment in a similar capacity? Full of these thoughts, she entered Martha's room.

The seamstress sat at the open window. The cool breeze that found its way in, lent a faint flush to her pale cheeks. In the cage over her head a canary bird sang—Martha's solitary extravagance. As she sat alone from morning till night engaged in her monotonous task, the bird supplied the place of human company, and beguiled a portion of the weary time.

Helen came in and seated herself on a cricket at Martha's feet.

Martha's face brightened, for she had already learned to love the child.

"I am glad to see you, Helen," she said. "How is your father, to-day?"

"Papa is much as usual."

"Hard at work as ever, I suppose."

"Yes; he allows himself no time to rest. I really think he ought. But, Martha, I am going to ask your advice about something very important to me," said the child, gravely.

"Thank you for your confidence, Helen. Whatever is of importance to you will be of interest to me."

"You remember telling me the other day that you liked my singing, and that I might some day

become a great singer. You know I told you at the time how glad I was to hear you say so."

"Yes, Helen; I remember it."

"I did not tell you then why I felt glad; but I will now."

Helen paused a moment, and then in a frank tone, which showed how little she was affected by the conventional shame some feel in disclosing their poverty, continued: "My father and I are very poor. We have been so for some time, but I got a little money by sewing, and that helped along. Now, you know, business is dull, and I can get no more work to do. The little money we have left will not last a fortnight, though I am *very* economical. So you see, Martha, it is quite necessary that I should find some way of earning more money at once."

"Does your father know how near you are to destitution?" inquired the seamstress.

"No," was the child's reply; "and I hope he will not find out. I cannot bear to trouble him with that, when he has so much to think of. It can't be very long before he finishes his model, and then we shall have plenty of money. If I can only earn enough to keep us along till that time I shall be very glad."

"Poor child!" thought Martha, compassionately; "it will be long enough before your father's invention fills your purse."

She was about to offer to procure Helen some work from the establishment where she was employed, but when she looked at the bright face of the young girl, and thought to what hours and days of weariness it would consign her, how it would steal one by one the roses from her cheeks,

and the freshness from her heart, leaving her with little to enjoy in the present and less to hope for in the future, she had not the heart to offer her the destiny which she had been compelled to accept for herself; nor could she bear to dim the child's trustful confidence in her father's success by the expression of a single doubt.

She remained silent.

Finding that Martha said nothing, Helen continued: "When I came to see you the other day, Martha, I had been trying to think of some way in which I could help poor papa, but I could think of nothing. Then when I sang to you and you liked it, I thought it possible that others might like it, too. Do you think," she asked, lifting her eyes with a look of earnest expectation; "do you think they would hire me to sing at the theatre?"

Martha started in surprise. As yet no thought of the child's purpose had entered her mind. To one so unobtrusive and retiring by natural temperament, the thought of going forth at the head of an army would have seemed scarcely more formidable than that of standing before a public audience. Yet this was what Helen, so diffident always, actually proposed to do.

"Can you really be in earnest, Helen?" she asked; gazing in amazement at the child who cherished such bold aspirations.

She did not understand the power of the motive which influenced Helen; how she made everything subordinate to the promptings of filial affection, which was stronger than any other feeling of her nature. That gave her courage to think of what she would otherwise have shrunk from with nerv-

ous timidity. For her father she felt that she could dare all. It was a strange position, that of a young girl at her age, called upon to assume the oversight and care of providing for her father's comfort and necessities. Stranger still was it, that with all the knowledge of her father's dependence upon herself and his utter ignorance of the world and its ways, she should yet have retained so thorough a respect and reverence for him.

"Can you be in earnest?"

It was Helen's turn to be surprised at the question.

"Why not?" she asked. "It is my duty to help poor papa, and if I can do so in this way, why should I not?"

"That is true, Helen, but think of standing before so many hundreds, or perhaps thousands of people, with every eye fixed upon you. How could you bear that?"

"I should not think of it at all, Martha. When I am singing I can see nothing and hear nothing. I seem to be mounting up—up into the air, and floating among the clouds. I can't tell you how much I enjoy singing."

As Helen spoke her eyes sparkled, and her face flushed with enthusiasm. The exhibition of deep natural feeling is always impressive. Martha felt it to be so, and could not help admiring and loving the child more than ever. Helen had almost persuaded her.

"But," she continued with returning caution, "you may not always feel so. There would be times when you would not feel like singing, but sing only because you were obliged to. Then

when you encountered the glances of so many eyes, would not your heart sink and your courage fail you?"

"Then, Martha," said Helen, with simplicity, "I should think of poor papa, and how by my exertions I was able to make him comfortable, and how by and by, when he had succeeded, I should not be obliged to do anything more. Then I should think how much he had done for me, and how hard he is laboring even now. There would be a great satisfaction in that. I ought not to hesitate when I have an opportunity to do something for him, ought I, Martha?"

"You are a dear, good child," said the seamstress, affectionately; "and I will not say a single word more against your plan. But you must not be too hopeful. You may meet with disappointment about getting a situation."

"You mean that perhaps I shall not sing well enough, Martha," said Helen. "But I shall do my best when I think how much my father's comfort depends upon my success; and that will be sure to help me."

"No, Helen; that was not what I meant. I never for a moment doubted that you would sing well enough. Why, you sing like an angel."

"Did you ever an angel sing?" asked Helen, a little mischievously.

"In my dreams," said Martha, smiling. "But that was not the difficulty I thought of. Would your father be willing to have you go on the stage?"

"He would not be willing at first, so I think I shall not tell him till I find out whether they are willing to employ me. Papa is so thoughtful

of me that he would think I was attempting too much, or suspect it was poverty that led me to it. It will be better not to tell him at first."

"Then there is another thing to be considered. Perhaps there will be as many singers employed as are required. It is not always easy to obtain an engagement, even where one is deserving. If you only had some influential friends——"

"I have you," said Helen, archly.

Martha smiled faintly.

"I am afraid if that is all you have to rely upon that it will be leaning on a broken reed. However, we will hope for the best, and not despond till we have reason to do so."

So the two conversed till Helen heard a neighboring clock striking five.

"Five o'clock!" she exclaimed. "I did not know it was so late. I must go up and prepare supper."

She tripped lightly up stairs with a new hope in her heart. Unconscious of the cares which had fallen so early upon his daughter, Mr. Ford was laboring at his machinery. Helen came and stood by his side.

"Well, papa, what progress?" she asked, cheerfully.

"Very good, my child," said the dreamer. "I have just succeeded in obviating a difficulty which has perplexed me for some time."

"How very glad I am, papa. That ought to give you a good appetite for your supper. I shall have it ready in a few minutes."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

The next day Helen resolved to put her plan into execution. As soon as her morning duties were completed, and her father seated at his never-ending task, she dressed herself in the best manner her limited wardrobe would admit. Though inexperienced in the ways of the world, she felt instinctively the importance of making a favorable first impression. When she was quite ready, she left the room softly, and was soon mingling with the busy crowds that thronged Broadway. At first she walked rapidly, but, as she drew nearer her destination, and could see the imposing front of the theatre, her heart beat quick and her step became slower.

When she actually reached the entrance, a feeling of diffidence seized her, which she found it almost impossible to overcome. She felt that she could not enter, at least just then, and walked slowly by. After a while she walked back, but was withheld from entering again by a feeling scarcely less strong. Again she walked past, and again returned. This time she had schooled herself to the effort, and approaching, with hesitation, the office where tickets were sold for the evening's entertainment, inquired, in a low voice, for the manager.

"Who did you wish to see?" inquired the clerk, with some surprise visible in his manner.

The request was repeated.

"The manager? Can't say whether he's in or not. You must go to the back entrance and turn to the left. Then knock at the first door."

Helen looked bewildered.

"Have you been here before?"

"No, sir."

"Stop a minute, and I will show you, then. I shall close the office directly."

Helen was very glad of the delay, as it gave her time to assume an outward semblance of calmness.

Mr. Bowers, the manager, was seated in a small room connecting with the stage. He was a man of comfortable proportions, and bore the appearance of one whom the world had used not unkindly. Though, in general, good-tempered, he was, on this particular morning, "out of sorts." A new play was to be brought out in the evening. The actors had been allowed very little time to "get up" their parts, and, as a natural consequence, the rehearsal of the morning had been, thus far, a series of blunders. In addition to this, the "star" had failed to make his appearance, and the prospect for a successful evening did not look very bright.

Under these circumstances it was not altogether surprising that Mr. Bowers should feel disappointed and irritated.

It was at this inauspicious moment that Helen was ushered into his presence. The manager looked up with visible vexation, serving to add to the embarrassment under which Helen was already laboring.

"Well?" he demanded, in a quick, impatient tone.

Helen felt that it would be a relief if the floor would open and swallow her up, or if she could escape in some other way. The interview, which had seemed comparatively easy in the quiet of her own room, had now become very formidable. She began to wonder at her own presumption in supposing herself capable of pleasing the public with her simple songs, and to feel that Martha's partiality must have led astray her better judgment.

While these thoughts were passing through her mind, she sat silent, quite unable to frame a sentence. The manager regarded her with surprise, unable to account for her silence.

"What is your business with me?" he inquired, in a tone which indicated that his time was of great consequence, and the sooner he was left to himself the better he should be suited.

Helen understood the tone quite as readily as the words, and, imperative as it was, it assisted in recalling her to herself. She came to the point at once.

"Do you wish to engage any one to sing for you?"

She had said all that was necessary, and then she stopped, half-frightened at her own temerity.

It was the manager's turn to look surprised. He had not taken the trouble to wonder what the child's business was. He had only asked as a necessary form, preparatory to dismissing her. He looked more particularly at her now, noticing her childish form and air, and asked, abruptly,—

"Are you inquiring for yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

She looked up earnestly in his face. Her bon-

net had partly fallen back, revealing the rare loveliness of which she was unconscious. She waited breathlessly for the answer.

"Our company is full," said Mr. Bowers, coldly. He turned again to his desk, and resumed his writing. His manner said, so plainly, "You may go," that Helen prepared to obey the unspoken but implied direction. Her heart sank within her at this first disappointment. Thoughts of the coming destitution, which she had hoped to ward off by this means, crowded upon her, and she could scarcely keep back the rebellious tears, which, had she been alone, would have had free course.

As she passed slowly out, a messenger hurriedly entered the office.

"Well, what now?" asked the manager, somewhat testily. "Any more blunders? It seems as if everything conspired against us. Has ——— made his appearance?"

"No, sir."

"And won't, I'll be bound. These fellows claim the lion's share of the profits, and trouble themselves little about the convenience of their employers."

"Miss De Forrest is indisposed, sir, and will be unable to sing this evening."

"Indisposed! Unable to appear!" repeated the manager, angrily. "And why the d—l must she take this particular evening to be sick? I don't believe a word of it. Go to her, and tell her we can't spare her."

"It is reported," said the messenger, deprecatingly, for Mr. Bowers was in one of those moods when it was difficult to make him listen to

reason; "it is reported that she has a fever, and will not be able to appear for some time."

"A fever! And what business has she to have a fever?" growled the manager. "Well," said he, after a brief pause, "is there nobody to take her place?"

"I know of no one."

Mr. Bowers mused a moment. "It won't do," he thought, "to omit the songs altogether, especially to-night, when we are likely to have so many other shortcomings. I have it, Jeffries," he exclaimed. "Did you notice the child who left the office as you entered?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think you should know her again?"

"I think so."

"Then follow her immediately, and bring her back with you. Say I wish to see her."

When Helen left the theatre, she walked very slowly, as if to gain time to become reconciled to her late disappointment. What a revulsion of feeling had a single half-hour wrought in her! Her high hopes had been dashed to the earth, and nothing was left but a sense of humiliation and rebuked presumption. Had she but been invited to sing, by way of testing her powers, that would have been something; but to have been refused so coldly and peremptorily, might well depress her.

Walking slowly, she had not proceeded far when she heard some one calling after her, "You are to come back. Mr. Bowers wishes to see you."

Not supposing that she was intended, she did not turn till some one touched her arm, and

looking back she recognized the young man who had entered the manager's office as she left it.

"Did you just leave the theatre?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Helen, with sudden hope.

"Mr. Bowers would like to see you again, then."

Helen experienced another revulsion of feeling. The clouds seemed breaking. The recall was evidently favorable to her prospects of an engagement.

Five minutes found her once more in the manager's presence.

"What is your name?" he asked, abruptly.

"Helen Ford."

"Humph! that will do. Have you parents living?"

"Only a father."

"And did he send you here?"

"No, sir," said Helen.

"Does he know that you have come?"

Helen shook her head somewhat uneasily. New difficulties seemed to be springing up in her path.

"After all," thought the manager, "if she's really worth engaging, her father's consent is not essential. He will not object to her earning something by her voice. At any rate I'll try her, and see if she has any talent."

"What can you sing?" he asked, after a pause, in which Helen watched his face eagerly.

"What would you like to hear, sir?"

"Jeffries, what songs are announced for this evening?"

"'The Widow Machree' and 'Comin' thro' the Rye,' sir."

"Can you sing these, Miss Ford?"

"I will try, sir."

"Mind," premised the manager, cautiously, "I don't promise to engage you, even if your singing is satisfactory. As I said before, our company is already full, but there may be a vacancy some time; and if so, I shall want to know where to look for some one to fill it."

Mr. Bowers threw himself back in his arm-chair, and, with a magisterial wave of the hand, signalled Helen to begin.

She paused a moment, as if to collect herself, resolutely putting aside the feeling of embarrassment which was stealing over her. She felt that she had too much at stake to hazard all by giving way to nervous weakness. It was not long that she suffered from timidity. She commenced singing in a low voice, but gradually confidence came to her, and it acquired strength. Her voice was wonderfully sweet and flexible. Mr. Bowers started slightly when she commenced, and at once became attentive. More than this, he was charmed. The whole room became vocal with melody. Even on the stage, where the actors were listlessly rehearsing their parts for the evening, Helen's voice was heard, and they quietly gathered about the entrance, and listened in mute surprise, wondering what musical prodigy had so seasonably turned up to supply the place of Miss De Forrest.

The song ceased, and Helen stood in silence, awaiting the manager's verdict.

Mr. Bowers had been delighted with an exhibition of talent so far surpassing his most sanguine expectations. But managers are not enthusi-

astic, and he was far too polite to express all he felt. That would have been quite unprofessional.

"You have done very well, Miss Ford," he said, graciously. "You have not overrated your talents, as is the case with some who aspire to sing in public. Of whom have you taken lessons?"

"My mother taught me to sing."

"Indeed! And was your mother a professional singer?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"She has evidently taught you well. Your voice, too, is very fair,—very fair, indeed."

"Do I sing well enough to appear in public, sir?" asked Helen, eagerly.

"Yes, or you may in time. Of course, you require training."

"Thank you, sir."

"When you were here, a few minutes since, I thought I had no place for you. I have been informed since that Miss De Forrest, my regular singer, is unexpectedly taken ill, and may not recover for some time. I will engage you for a week in her place if we can agree upon terms."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said Helen, with difficulty concealing her joy.

"I will pay you six dollars for the first week," continued the manager. "Should you do well, and I have occasion to employ you longer, I may increase your compensation. But, of course, being a beginner, you cannot expect a large salary."

Large! Six dollars seemed to Helen a small fortune. It would enable them to live better than she had dared to do since they became inmates of Mrs. Morton's boarding-house.

"You will be expected to make your first appearance this evening, in the songs which you have already sung. You will present yourself at rehearsal to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. We will dispense with it to-day."

"At what hour shall I come this evening?" asked Helen.

"The doors will open at seven. You may present yourself an hour earlier. It will be necessary for you to dress and become familiar with the stage before the performance commences."

Helen hurried home, not as before with a heavy heart, but with a feeling of deep and thankful joy. It seemed as if she could not get over the ground fast enough. She was anxious to report her success to good Martha Grey, who, she felt sure, would sympathize with her. She bounded along, regardless of the stares and astonished looks of those with whom she came in collision, and never paused until she entered, breathless with haste, the room of her friend.

"What is the matter, Helen?" asked Martha, looking up from her work. "You seem quite wild with excitement."

"I have succeeded, Martha. Only think of that. I am to sing to-night at the theatre. I am engaged for a week, and am to receive six dollars."

"I am sincerely glad, my dear child," said Martha, affectionately. "Wait till you have recovered your breath, and then you shall tell me all about it."

As Martha listened to her glowing recital, she caught some of her enthusiasm, and never

doubted that she must and would pass triumphantly through the trying ordeal of a first introduction to the public.

CHAPTER XII.

HELEN'S DEBUT.

THERE was one difficulty attending the carrying out of her plan which occasioned Helen some embarrassment. She was to present herself at the theatre at six, and would, undoubtedly, be detained there until late in the evening. How she could absent herself so long without incurring her father's suspicions, was a problem which she found it difficult to solve. Under any other circumstances she would have hesitated about taking a step so important with her father's consent previously obtained, but now she was impelled, by her very affection for her father, to conceal what she proposed doing until she had taken the first step.

At length Martha proposed that she should openly ask permission to attend the theatre in her company. Mr. Ford, of course, would never dream her real object. Perhaps this was the best plan that could have been devised. Her father only answered, "Certainly, my dear; I hope you will enjoy yourself."

"But will you not be lonely, papa?"

"I shall be too busy for that, Helen," he said, glancing at his unfinished model.

Relieved on this point, Helen made the necessary preparations and left the house in company with Martha, who had promised to bear her com-

pany as far as the theatre. She did not propose to be present, knowing that under the peculiar circumstances attending a first appearance, and the trying ordeal through which Helen was to pass, the presence of a friend might prove rather an additional embarrassment than a help.

At the stage entrance they parted.

"Keep up good courage, Helen," said Martha, pressing her hand affectionately; "keep up good courage, and all will be well."

Helen stood for a moment watching her receding form, and then as the strokes of a neighboring clock warned her to be punctual, knocked at the door. It was opened by Jeffries, the messenger of the morning.

"Miss Ford," said he, respectfully, "I am directed to lead you at once to the dressing-room."

Helen was ushered through a dark passage and up a narrow winding staircase to the room referred to. It was crowded with a heterogeneous collection of articles of dress, of every conceivable variety of shade, cut, and material. Here lay the rich robes of royalty in juxtaposition with the coarse attire of a milk-maid. Both had been in requisition the night before.

Helen looked about her with a feeling of bewilderment, when an elderly lady, with a pleasant expression, advanced towards her.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Ford," she said. "So you are going to join us. I think you have never appeared before."

"I have never been in a theatre but once before."

"Bless me, where have you lived all your

life?" exclaimed her companion, in unaffected amazement. Her own familiarity with the theatre made her look upon Helen as singularly unsophisticated.

"Papa and I have always lived very quietly," said Helen, smiling, "and he never goes himself."

"Before I select a dress for you," said Mrs. Girdle, for such she informed Helen was her name, I will show you the stage. You will want to know where to make your entrance and exit."

Taking Helen's hand, she led her forward until she stood on the stage—a place of mystery, which to the uninitiated who only see it from a distance in the glare of gas-light, seems like a land of enchantment, peopled by kings and nobles, fair ladies and gallant gentlemen. Now it was dreary and comfortless. A very faint light threw its sickly beams over coarsely-painted scenes and tawdry ornaments.

Was this the stage which had seemed so bright and beautiful to Helen only a few evenings before? It was, indeed, the same. She recognized the green curtain, the use of which had puzzled her, and the long rows of empty seats which stared her in the face when she proceeded to the front. The house itself had undergone as dreary a metamorphosis. Then it was alive with bright and eager faces. Now it was dark and cheerless.

But Helen had little time to spend in looking about her. She was summoned to the side of Mrs. Girdle, who in a business-like manner explained to her what it was necessary for her to know. Helen listened with attention, and promised to remember.

"It is very important that you should bear in

mind all I have been telling you," said Mrs. Girdle. "I can tell you that from my own experience. When I first appeared on the stage as a young girl, I paid less attention than I ought to this point. It was very easy finding my way off the stage in the daytime when there was nothing to distract my attention, but in the evening it was a different affair. I remember doing very well till it was time to withdraw. Then in my excitement I quite forgot all that I ought to have remembered. I turned about in confusion, and seemed to see every eye fixed upon me. I was seized with a nervous terror. The audience I thought were laughing at me. In my desperation I darted forward, little heeding where, and fell through a trap-door which had carelessly been left open. Fortunately I was not injured seriously, only receiving a salutary fright, which taught me to be more careful in future."

"Do you appear to-night?" asked Helen, with interest.

"I do not play as much as formerly, scarcely at all in fact," answered Mrs. Girdle, somewhat sadly. "New favorites have sprung up, and my services are no longer required, except in emergencies."

They had reached the dressing-room, and Mrs. Girdle bestirred herself to find an appropriate dress for Helen. A plain white muslin was selected, looped at the sleeves with blue ribbons. Some little alterations were made in the arrangement of her hair, and Mrs. Girdle seemed satisfied.

"No need of artificial color here," said she, with a glance at Helen's flushed cheeks. "Nature

has taken care of that. You are really very pretty, Miss Ford."

"Thank you," said Helen; "but it sounds strange to have you call me Miss Ford. Nobody calls me so."

"What is your name, then?"

"Helen."

"I am glad it is a pretty one. It suits you better. Does no one tell you that you are pretty?"

"Sometimes."

"And does it not make you feel vain?"

"Why should it?" inquired Helen, seeming surprised.

Mrs. Girdle looked at her with some curiosity. It was long since she had met with one so natural and transparent, and she hardly knew how to understand her. The world she had lived in did not abound in such characters.

"Now, my dear," she said, after a pause, "since you are quite ready, and there is still a little time left, you had better run back to the stage and just hum over your songs to yourself. In that way you will be getting accustomed to the place."

Seven o'clock came, and with it the opening of the doors. Then the audience began to assemble at first in small groups, afterwards in larger parties, till by and by every available seat was taken. Among them came M'lle Fanchette, the aristocratic *modiste*, Helen's fellow-lodger. She wore a superb bonnet of white satin, above which fluttered a feather of stately and imposing elevation, making her a very magnificent personage in her own opinion. She was in unusually good

spirits, having secured the escort and attendance of the young clerk, whose youth she regarded as a compliment to her own juvenility, to which she still clung tenaciously. She had in her hand a large opera-glass, which she used with a freedom which made her more conspicuous than her companion desired.

The theatre was crowded—chiefly in consequence of the new play and the new actor. Soon the orchestra commenced playing, and a few minutes later the curtain rose.

The play, in some measure, disappointed the expectations of the audience. The star was but poorly supported by the stock company, who had been compelled to get up their parts at short notice. It was, perhaps, the consciousness of this poor support that made the leading actor's personation less striking and effective than usual. The audience remained cold, and seldom indulged in applause. It seemed desirable, therefore, that the remaining parts of the performance should go off well.

Helen had watched the progress of the play from one of the wings. Her unpractised eyes could not detect deficiencies, and she became so absorbed as to forget for the time being that she herself was soon to take part. As the curtain fell, the manager walked hastily forward to the place where she stood.

"Miss Ford," he said, "you will be called immediately. We shall expect you to do your best. Above all, don't allow yourself to be frightened. Think as little as possible of the audience, and you will do well enough."

Until this moment Helen had not thought of

the possibility of failure. Now the conviction dawned upon her in all its force, that she was about to sing before two thousand people—she who had always lived in such perfect quiet and tranquillity. Her heart began to flutter like an imprisoned bird, and her color went and came. For a moment she felt that she would gladly be back in her humble room by her father's side. At this trying moment she felt a gentle touch upon her arm. Turning quickly, her eyes rested on the kind face of Mrs. Girdle.

"Oh, Mrs. Girdle," she whispered, in a tremulous tone. "I am so frightened. I don't dare to go on."

"Keep up your courage, Helen," said her friend, gently pressing her hand. "I can understand your feelings, for I have passed through a similar ordeal. It *is* a trial, but one through which you will pass triumphantly. You have only to fancy that you are singing in your own room at home. Make a resolute effort, and you will succeed."

"I will try," said Helen, more composed.

"Miss Ford!"

It was the call-boy's voice, and she hurried to the place from which she was to make her entrance upon the stage. Another moment and she stood before the audience. There was something so sweet and simple in her loveliness, that a general murmur of approbation was heard, and then there was a round of applause. This came near unnerving Helen. She caught a glimpse of the sea of faces that were turned towards her, and her head began to whirl. But Mrs. Girdle's reassuring words came back to her. Above all, the

thought of her father, in whose behalf she had taken this step, inspired her with a determination to succeed. The blush of momentary embarrassment which suffused her face did her no harm. It enlisted the warm sympathy of the audience, who again exhibited their good-will by a fresh outbreak of applause.

There was one present, however, who gazed at Helen as if petrified with astonishment.

"Look!" ejaculated M'lle Fanchette, convulsively clutching the arm of her companion. "If there isn't Helen Ford on the stage. I can scarcely believe my eyes."

"I believe you are right," returned the young gentleman addressed. "I had no idea she was connected with the theatre."

"It can't be possible she's going to sing!" ejaculated M'lle Fanchette. "Well, if ever——"

Just then the music struck up.

In a voice slightly tremulous, but gaining in strength as she proceeded, Helen commenced. There was no fear of failure now. She had forgotten the audience. She sang with all the freedom and joyousness of a bird, as if her whole heart was in the song. There was an indefinable charm about her manner, so thoroughly natural in its simplicity. She was evidently winning golden opinions.

As the last note died away, a storm of applause greeted her from all parts of the house. This recalled Helen to herself. No longer occupied by the song, she gazed around her half bewildered, with the air of a startled fawn. At this moment a magnificent bouquet, thrown from one of the boxes, alighted at her feet. Too little

accustomed to the stage to understand that it was meant for her, she was about to withdraw without taking it, when a hoarse whisper was heard from one of the wings, "Pick it up."

Mechanically she obeyed the direction, and bowing hastily, her cheeks burning with confusion, she retreated from the stage.

The manager met her.

"You have done very well, Miss Ford," he said, encouragingly. "They are calling you back. You must go on the stage once more. And mind you don't undo the favorable impression you have already produced.

Go back again! Helen's heart fluttered nervously, but there was no appeal. She drew a long breath, and went back.

Her reappearance was greeted with enthusiasm. Then followed a profound silence—a hush of expectation. The clear voice of Helen once more broke the stillness, as she re-commenced her song. Helen's eyes were directed towards the audience, but she saw them not. She was carried back in memory to the time when she sang this song at her mother's knee, and unconsciously a gentle pathos and tone of repressed feeling blended with her notes that touched the audience, and hushed them to earnest attention.

There was a hard-featured Scotchman who sat in one of the front seats in the parquet, who, listening intently, furtively wiped a tear from his eye.

"She's a sweet lassie," he said, in a low tone, to his neighbor. "There's a look about her that minds me of one I shall never see again."

And the worthy Scotchman, whose heart was

tender, though his manner was rough and his features hard, thought sadly of a flower that once bloomed in his home, but had faded early,—transplanted to the gardens of Paradise.

"Well!" remarked M'lle Fanchette, fanning herself violently, "to think of the forwardness of that child. If she had any modesty, she wouldn't brazen it out before the public with so much boldness."

"She seems modest enough," replied Alphonso Eustace, to whom this remark was addressed, "and she certainly sings magnificently. Her voice is superb."

"I saw nothing very remarkable about her singing," returned the lady, fanning herself with increased violence. "I suppose there are other people that have voices as well as she. I used to sing myself, but nothing on earth would have tempted me to make such a public exhibition of myself."

Her companion thought it extremely doubtful whether M'lle Fanchette would ever be tempted to break her resolution, but thought it most prudent to remain silent.

Meanwhile, Helen was greeted in a very different manner behind the scenes. Mrs. Girdle came forward, and congratulated her with a beaming smile upon her success.

"You have done beautifully, my dear child. Were you frightened when you first went on?"

"A little; but I remembered your words, and I succeeded in forgetting the audience. I am so glad you think I did well."

"You couldn't have done better."

Of course, Helen was pleased and happy,—

happy in the thought that she had pleased those who were interested for her. The thought that she had personally achieved a triumph never presented itself to her. For, in spite of her splendid endowments, she was singularly free from vanity, or even from the consciousness which would have led to such a feeling. Her chief thought was, that she should now be enabled to contribute to her father's comforts by her pay at the theatre, and that thus he would be able to keep on with his labors, and perfect his invention.

Late at night she reached her humble lodging. Her father was already sleeping. Quickly undressing herself, she crept softly into bed, and in five minutes the weary child was sleeping also.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABSENT ON BUSINESS.

The afternoon was already well advanced when Richard Sharp rose leisurely from the armchair in which he had been lounging. He threw aside the stump of a cigar which he had been smoking, and walking to the window, looked out.

"I wonder if it is going to rain," he thought. "I must raise an umbrella somewhere."

After passing his fingers through his bristling locks, which had the effect of giving each particular hair an upward tendency,—a favorite habit of Mr. Sharp, who regards it perhaps as the sign of an aspiring intellect,—our attorney

put on his white hat and, opening the door of his office, stepped out upon the landing. Before locking the door he carefully affixed a card bearing upon it, in bold characters, "Absent on Business." Mr. Sharp never dispenses with this little formality, even when he is only going round the corner to order an oyster-stew, or to a neighboring hotel to while away an hour at billiards. Entertaining broad and philosophic views of life, he regards any action, however trivial, in the light of business; and with this idea feels abundantly justified in leaving behind him this standing notice. And who shall say he is not right?

It chanced on this particular occasion, however, that Mr. Sharp's business was really of a professional character.

On the stairs our lawyer met a stout, puffy little counsellor, whose business yielded him probably an income of from eight to ten thousand dollars a year. Mr. Sharp bowed with a mixture of condescension and affability. Passing a door on a lower floor, he noticed an umbrella standing outside. Was it in a fit of absence of mind that Mr. Sharp appropriated it, and with innocent unconsciousness raised it above his head when he got into the street? If so, his temporary abstraction served him in good stead since the rain was already beginning to fall.

Reaching the street he was accosted by a newsboy who was anxious to place in his hands a sheet containing a record of all the latest news that had transpired in both hemispheres—and all for the insignificant sum of five cents! Mr. Sharp took the paper. He then began to fumble about in his pocket for the required change.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, after two or three dives which brought forth nothing, "I believe on my soul that I haven't got any change. Such a ridiculously small sum, too!"

He looked pensively at the boy, who gazed at him in return in patient expectation.

After a moment's pause the lawyer explained, suddenly, "Perhaps you can change a fifty?"

"Half a dollar!" said the boy, briskly, "Oh, yes!" and he forthwith pulled out a handful of small silver pieces mingled with pennies.

"My young friend," remarked Mr. Sharp, graciously, "I meant a fifty-dollar bill."

The newsboy whistled. "Perhaps you take me for a bank," he remarked. "I can't change no fifties. I can change a one or a two may be."

"My boy," said the attorney, with a gentle intonation, "I never carry small bills about with me. If you will call on me to-morrow, I will take another paper."

The little newsboy looked in bewilderment after the retreating form of Mr. Sharp. There was something wrong unquestionably. He had parted with his paper, and had not obtained an equivalent. But how could he summon up confidence to dun a man of such magnificent conceptions that a bill representing his entire capital would be too small for him to carry about.

"I'd a good deal rather trade with people that ain't so darned rich," thought the newsboy, ruefully.

Then it occurred to him that his customer had asked him to call the next day, and he had not been told where to call. Mr. Sharp was still near, and he determined to run after him and inquire.

In a minute or two the lawyer was made sensible of a slight tugging at his coat-tail. Looking around, his eye rested on the little newsboy.

"Well, my friend," said he, blandly, "in what way can I serve you?"

"You asked me to leave you a paper to-morrow, but I don't know where you live."

"O yes, certainly," said Mr. Sharp, "how could I be so neglectful? You will find me at any time in my office, third story, round the corner. Anybody will tell you where. And now, as I am called away upon important business, I shall be compelled to request you to release your hold upon my coat-tail."

So saying he smiled benignantly, and walked away.

"'Third story, round the corner;'" slowly repeated the boy. "'Anybody will tell me!' What corner, I'd like to know? And how in thunder am I to know what third story it is, and who I am to ask for when I find it?"

The young merchant shook his head dubiously as these formidable queries suggested themselves to him, and came to the conclusion that he was no better off than before he inquired.

Meanwhile Mr. Sharp pursued his way, smiling complacently as he thought of the admirable manner in which he had obtained possession of the newspaper without rendering an equivalent.

"You're a shrewd fellow, Sharp," said he to himself. "There are not many who would have managed it so cleverly."

Mr. Sharp kept on his way with quiet dignity, dispensing affable smiles to such acquaintances as he met. Sometimes his smiles were returned

with cold nods, by such as were familiar with his unscrupulous character; but our lawyer was on such good terms with himself, that these little rebuffs appeared to have no effect upon him. At length he paused before Mrs. Morton's boarding-house. Opening the outer door, he ascended three flights of stairs until he reached Mr. Ford's apartment. He knocked, but although sounds were heard from within there was no response. Rightly judging that Mr. Ford was so preoccupied that he had not heard or noticed the knock, he knocked again, this time louder. As this too was disregarded, he opened the door softly and went in.

It was the afternoon preceding Helen's *début* at the theatre, and this accounted for her absence. Mr. Sharp was secretly glad to find it so, judging that Helen's presence might possibly interfere with his object in calling.

"Mr. Ford," he said, bowing benignantly, as that gentleman chanced to look up, "I beg you will pardon my entering so unceremoniously. I have availed myself of the polite invitation you so kindly extended some days since, to look in upon you and observe your progress. I knocked twice, but understanding that you were too absorbed to hear it, I took the liberty of opening the door without leave."

Mr. Ford politely expressed his pleasure at seeing him, though it required an effort on his part to recall the name of his visitor, or the circumstances under which they had first met. "In spite of my numerous engagement," resumed Mr. Sharp, "I could not forego the pleasure of looking in upon you at your labors. I have many

times blessed the chance which procured me the acquaintance of yourself and your amiable daughter. I look upon you, my dear sir, as engaged in a work of infinite importance to society, and to the welfare of the human race. And in after years, when posterity shall have done ample justice to your merits, when your name has been elevated to its appropriate place beside those of Watt and Franklin—and—Christopher Columbus, it will be my proudest boast that I recognized your claims to the world's gratitude in advance of others."

To Mr. Ford, who was thoroughly convinced of the practicability of his invention, and its great importance to the world, this language did not seem extravagant. Never doubting his visitor's sincerity, he could not but feel grateful for the meed of encouragement to which he was a stranger. At the request of Mr. Sharp he began to explain some of the chief features in his invention, the lawyer listened with the greatest apparent interest.

"It is admirable!" he exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "Take my word for it, it must and will succeed. But pardon me for suggesting that with better materials your model would be likely to prove more satisfactory. An inventor should be able to command large means in order to perfect his plans."

"Of that I am aware," said Mr. Ford, with hesitation. "But, as you have no doubt inferred, from the style in which Helen and I live, my means are very limited."

"No more," said Mr. Sharp, warmly, "I anticipate all that you would say. "Yet, if you will

pardon me the question, why do you not apply to your friends for a loan?"

Mr. Ford shook his head, smiling faintly. "It would be of no use," he said.

"Sir," said the worthy attorney, grasping the hand of the inventor with an effusion of emotion, "you do your friends injustice. To convince you of it, I, the unworthiest of those whose proud privilege it is to bear that title, offer to loan you two hundred dollars. It is not much——"

"But, my dear sir——"

"No, sir, you shall not object. I am determined to connect my name in some way with this important discovery. To satisfy your scruples, I will consent to your signing this note for the amount. You may affix your signature while I am counting the money."

"But I may never be able to pay you."

"That risk is mine. I ask no security. I claim no interest. It is enough that in this way I am able to link my name with modest merit, and aid in bringing forward a discovery which will prove of incalculable benefit to mankind."

Poor Mr. Ford! He was tempted beyond his power of resistance. This timely aid would enable him to carry out plans which he thought likely to expedite his final triumph. Yes, he would accept what was so generously proffered. A little while and he would be able to repay the loan with interest. So at least he was sanguine enough to think.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently," he said, warmly, "for this mark of generous and disinterested friendship towards a comparative stranger. The delicacy with which you tender this loan re-

moves all the objections I might otherwise have to receiving it. Again I thank you."

He signed the note and handed it to Mr. Sharp, who took from his pocket-book the sum mentioned and laid it on the table. The lawyer put the note into his pocket, saying, as he did so, "This strip of paper is to me of inestimable value in so far as it connects me with one whose name, I am sure, will be handed down to fame as one of the greatest of modern inventors. But, sir, my mission is accomplished, I will not further trespass upon your valuable time. I trust you will not scruple to use freely the money I have advanced for the furtherance of your great purpose. I shall claim the privilege of sometimes looking in upon you and witnessing your progress."

"You will always be most welcome," said Mr. Ford, cordially.

"Rather a clever operation that!" thought Mr. Sharp, as he threaded his way down-stairs. "It was a capital idea, making out the note for three hundred dollars and only paying him two. I knew he would never detect it. After all, the extra hundred will do more good in my hands than in Ford's, who would only waste it on his crazy invention. My client will never be the wiser. By the way, he must have some deep scheme on foot, or he would never throw away such a sum on a crack-brained enthusiast. I think, old fellow, you've earned a good oyster-supper, with a glass or so to make it go down. Talking has made me as dry as a herring."

And the benevolent Mr. Sharp, who was so anxious to connect his name with an important

discovery in science, gravely entered a neighboring saloon and called for something to drink. Human nature is not at all times heroic.

CHAPTER XIV.

HELEN MAKES KNOWN HER ENGAGEMENT.

It was again morning. Helen sat at the window, which was thrown wide open to admit the pleasant breeze that rustled in and out like a restless sprite, laden, not with rich odors and sweet perfumes from green fields, but resonant with the noises of the crowded city streets.

There was an expression of doubt and perplexity in Helen's face. She was considering whether it would be possible to make known to her father her engagement at the theatre, without, at the same time, revealing the motive which had led her to seek it. She was assured that her father would feel deeply pained if he knew the real state of the case, and she dreaded that he might object to her keeping her engagement. While she was hesitating, her father suddenly turned from his work and met her glance.

"A penny for your thoughts, Helen," he said, with unwonted playfulness.

"My thoughts!" and she blushed consciously. "I am afraid, papa, they are not worth so much."

"How cool and refreshing is the air!" mused Mr. Ford, as he stood for a moment at the window. "Mark how beautifully the clouds are tinged with the faintest flush of red. Well have the old poets spoken of morning as 'rosy-fingered.' Would you like to go out for a walk, Helen?"

Helen looked up at the clock. It lacked yet two hours of the time for rehearsal. There would be plenty of time for a walk, which, with her father, was never a long one.

"Perhaps I shall be able to say something about my engagement, on the way," she thought.

She silently got her bonnet, and, placing her hand in that of her father, descended the stairs into the street. Here all was life and activity. In the early morning of a pleasant day the streets of a great city present a pleasant and cheerful aspect. Everything is full of stir and bustle. Even the jaded dray-horse pricks up his ears, and shows some signs of life. Boys and girls expend their superabundant activity in bounding along the sidewalk, and even the man of business seems lightened of a portion of his cares. There is a subtile electricity in the air, which unconsciously affects the spirits of all, and lights up many faces with vague hopefulness.

Helen yielded herself up to the influences of the morning, and a quiet sense of happiness stole over her. She thought how beautiful in itself is the gift of life, and how glad we ought to be for the bright sunshine, and the clear, refreshing air, and the beautiful earth. The conflicts of life were lost sight of. She forgot, in the exhilaration of her spirits, that the days were sometimes dark, and the clouds leaden. Her father seemed affected in a similar way. A faint flush crept to his wan cheek, and his step became more elastic.

"How the difficulties and embarrassments of our daily lives fade away in this glorious sunshine!" he said, musingly. "Sometimes I have had fears that my discovery would never prove

available; but to-day success seems almost within my grasp. It would be a sin to doubt, when all Nature whispers auguries of hope."

"You must succeed, papa," said Helen, cheerfully.

"So I feel now. I catch the inspiration of this cooling breeze. It breathes new life into me. It gives me fresh courage to work, for the end draws near."

Mr. Ford relapsed into silence, and Helen walked quietly by his side, occupied with her own thoughts. All at once she became sensible that she had attracted the attention of a little knot of boys, who were conversing together in a low tone, pointing first to her, and then to a large placard posted conspicuously on the wall beside her.

"That's she!" she heard pronounced in an audible voice. "I saw her last night."

Following the direction of their fingers, she started in surprise on reading, in large capitals, her own name. It was the bill of the evening's entertainment in the theatre at which she was engaged. The surprise was so unexpected, that she uttered a half-exclamation, which, however, was sufficient to draw her father's attention to the bill.

THE TALENTED YOUNG VOCALIST,

MISS HELEN FORD,

WILL MAKE HER SECOND APPEARANCE THIS EVENING IN A POPULAR SONG.

"It is very strange," said Mr. Ford, stopping short as he read this announcement; "some one having the same name with you, Helen?"

"No, papa," said she, in a low voice.

"No?" repeated her father, in surprise. "Then you don't see the name."

"Will you promise not to be angry with me, papa, if I tell you all."

"Angry! Am I often angry with you, Helen?"

"No, no! I did not mean that. But perhaps you will think I have done wrong."

"I am still in the dark, Helen."

"Then," said the young girl, hurriedly, and with flushed face, "that is *my* name. I am the Helen Ford whose name is on the bill."

"You, Helen!" exclaimed her father, in undisguised amazement.

"Yes, papa. I have been wanting to tell you all this morning; but I hardly knew how."

"I don't understand. Have you ever sung there?"

"Last night, for the first time."

Helen proceeded to give her father a circumstantial account of her interview with the manager, her repulse at first, and her subsequent engagement. She added that she had hesitated to tell him, lest he should object to her accepting it. She next spoke of her first appearance upon the stage,—how at first she was terrified at sight of the crowded audience, but had succeeded in overcoming her timidity, and lost all consciousness of her trying position in the enjoyment of singing.

"You have forgotten one thing, Helen," said her father, gravely. "You have not told me what first gave you the idea of singing in public."

"It was Martha," said Helen, in some embarrassment, foreseeing what was coming. "One day I sang in her room, and she was so well

pleased, that she told me I might one day become a public singer."

"And that was all, Helen?"

"What else should there be, papa?" she answered, evasively.

"Indeed, I do not know. I thought it might be because you supposed we were poor, and wished to earn some money. But you see, Helen, there is no need of that;" and he drew out his pocket-book, and displayed to the child's astonished gaze the roll of bills which Mr. Sharp had insisted on loaning him the day previous.

"Indeed, papa, I had no idea you were so rich."

"A kind friend lent me this money yesterday."

"Who was it, papa?"

"You remember a man who came to see us a fortnight since,—a tall man with a white hat?"

"Yes, papa."

"He lent me the money."

"Did you ask him, papa?"

"No; it was his own generous offer."

"But suppose he should want you to pay it by and by, and you did not have the money?" suggested Helen, uneasily.

"There is no fear on that score. He desires to assist me with my invention, and suggested, very properly, that with improved materials my progress would become more rapid. Once let me succeed, and I shall be able to repay the loan, if it were twice as large. He will never think of asking me for it before. He is a very generous-hearted man, Helen, and he only called it a loan because he knew that I should be unwilling to accept a gift."

Helen could not gainsay her father's words.

She could not conceive of any evil purpose on the part of Mr. Sharp; yet, somehow, an unaccountable sense of anxiety and apprehension of coming evil, in connection with this loan, would force itself upon her mind.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Ford, with a sudden thought, "you may need something that I can buy you,—some article of dress, or perhaps you may require an additional sum for the purchase of our daily necessaries. I am so much occupied in other ways that I do not always think of these things."

"No, papa," said Helen, hurriedly. "I do not need anything."

Then, yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, she exclaimed, "Dear papa, do not use any of this money. Pray, return it to this man, and tell him you do not need it."

"But it will be very useful to me, Helen. Besides, it would be a very uncivil way of meeting such a generous offer. You are a foolish child. What has put this fancy into your head?"

"I don't know," said Helen, slowly; "but I feel as if this money may do us some harm."

"What possible harm can come of it?" asked Mr. Ford, surprised at the child's earnestness.

"I do not like to think that you are in anybody's power, papa."

"We are all in the power of God, my child."

"I did not mean that, papa."

"And He is abundantly able to shield us from evil. Is it not so, Helen?"

Helen was silenced, but not wholly convinced. This was the more remarkable since nothing was more foreign to her nature than to cherish dis-

trust of any living thing. Even now, her feeling was rather an instinctive foreboding than any clearly-defined suspicion. The presence of Mr. Sharp, polite and affable as he appeared, had not impressed her pleasantly,—why, she could not tell. Oftentimes children are truer in their instinctive perception of character than their elders. It is fortunate that, in the absence of that knowledge which experience alone can give, they should be provided with this safeguard against the evil designs of those who might injure them.

Nine o'clock pealed from the lofty steeple of Trinity. Helen heard the strokes as one by one they rang out upon the air, and she was warned of the near approach of the hour for rehearsal.

"It is nearly time for rehearsal," she said, looking up in her father's face. "Shall I go?"

"Do you really wish to go, Helen?"

"I really wish it, papa."

"Then I will not interfere to prevent you. I have so much confidence in you, my child, that I am willing to trust you where others might suffer harm."

The father and child parted. One returned to his humble lodging in the fourth story back; the other wended her way to the theatre.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OPPOSITE LODGER.

During the day Helen, in ascending the stairs, encountered M'lle Fanchette.

"So you have become quite a public character, Miss Ford," said the *modiste,* superciliously.

Helen looked up, but did not speak.

"I heard you sing at the theatre, last evening."

"Yes, madam."

"Nothing would have induced me to come forward so publicly at your age. However, I suppose you don't mind it."

"No," said Helen, with rising color; "I don't mind it, since it enables me to earn money for my father."

"Isn't your father well? It isn't usual for children to be called upon to support their parents."

"Good morning, M'lle Fanchette," said Helen, abruptly. The implied censure upon her father kindled her resentment as no insult to herself would have done.

M'lle Fanchette looked after her with a sneer. "So my lady is putting on airs, is she? I don't believe her father's invention will ever come to anything. Perhaps I had better take no further notice of her."

Just as Helen reached the door of her father's room, she saw the occupant of the opposite apartment standing at his door. He was a young man of middle height, with a face whose boyish bloom had hardly given place to the more mature expression of manhood.

"Good morning, Miss Ford," he said, pleasantly.

"Good morning, Mr. Coleman."

"I was just about to ask a favor of you and your father."

Helen thought he might be intending to ask a loan of some little article, for it had come to her knowledge that he was boarding himself.

"I am sure we shall be happy to grant it," she said, cheerfully.

"I suppose you know that I am an artist, or trying to be," said the young man. "I have just finished a picture for exhibition at the Academy. No one has seen it yet, and I, perhaps, am not a fair judge of its merits. I should be very glad if you and Mr. Ford would take a look at it, and favor me with your opinion of it."

"I shall be delighted to see it, and so will papa, I know," returned Helen. "I will speak to him immediately."

"Papa," she said, entering the room, "Mr. Coleman is kind enough to invite us to look at a picture he has painted."

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Mr. Ford, looking up abstractedly. "Did you speak?"

Helen repeated the invitation.

"I shall be most happy," said Mr. Ford, courteously. "Let us go at once."

The opposite room was fitted up as an artist's studio,—plainly enough, for young Coleman was, as yet, only a struggling aspirant, without a name and without orders.

On an easel was the picture of which he had spoken. The subject was, "A country farm-house at sunrise." Broad and low, suggestive less of beauty than of substantial comfort, it stood prominently out. The farmer in his shirt-sleeves was leaning carelessly against the fence, watching a group of cattle who were just emerging from the barn, followed by the farmer's son, a stout boy of fourteen. There was a cart in the yard near the house, a plough, and a variety of accessories carefully selected to imitate nature as

scrupulously as possible. The whole painting was exceedingly natural.

"It is beautiful," said Helen, with childish enthusiasm.

"Thank you," said the young man, smiling.

"It looks very familiar to me," said Mr. Ford. "It seems to me as if I had seen the very farm-house you have represented."

"Thank you. I may dare to hope, then, that I have been reasonably true to nature."

"In that respect I think you have succeeded wonderfully. You must have been born in the country, Mr. Coleman."

"Yes, sir; I am a farmer's son."

"What made you think of becoming an artist?" asked Helen.

"I believe it was a severe punishment I received at school."

Helen looked surprised.

"I see you don't understand how that should have had such an influence in determining my career. Let me explain. I used from time to time to draw upon the slate pictures of my school-mates, which were regarded by the originals as very successful. One winter the Prudential Committee selected as teacher a young man of very singular appearance. His nose was immensely large, and of odd shape. One day, after finishing my sums in arithmetic, the fancy seized me to draw a picture of the teacher. I became interested in the portrait, so that when my class was called up I did not hear the summons, but kept on with my sketch. Seeing how I was employed, Mr. Hargrave stepped up behind me on tiptoe, and to his inexpressible anger beheld the counter-

feit presentment of himself, in which full justice was done to his leading deformity. He was probably sensible of his lack of beauty, and correspondingly sensitive. At all events, he was so far from appreciating my efforts, that he seized me by the collar, swung me out into the middle of the schoolroom, and gave me a cruel punishment, from which I did not for some time recover. I did not go back to school, my father being too indignant with the teacher for his unreasonable severity. He was desirous of seeing the sketch which had excited so strong a resentment. I accordingly reproduced it with a pencil as carefully as I could, and my father took the trouble to have it framed, and hung up in the sitting-room, where it attracted considerable attention and many encomiums. I believe it was this incident which led me to think seriously of becoming an artist by profession. Twelve months since my father gave me what little money he could spare, and I came to New York to establish myself."

"And what encouragement have you received, Mr. Coleman?" asked Mr. Ford, with kindly interest.

"Of pecuniary encouragement, none," was the reply. "That, however, it is too early to expect. I have been a part of the time in the studio of an established artist,—till two months since in fact, —obtaining what knowledge I absolutely required. Then I transferred my studio to this room. You see before you the result of my two months' labor."

"You have made an excellent beginning. I feel safe in predicting your success."

"Thank you, sir. You asked me what encouragement I had received. Your kind anticipation is among the most valuable."

"I do not, of course, profess to be a competent judge," said Mr. Ford; "but I think an inexperienced eye will see much to commend in your painting. Its truth to nature is very striking. It is a pity you could not study abroad."

"It is my ardent wish," said the young man, "but quite beyond my power to compass. I have now been a year in the city, learning much, as I hope, but earning nothing. This has nearly brought me to the end of my scanty resources. I shall not be able to continue thus much longer. I confess to have built some hopes upon the picture I have just painted. If I could secure a purchaser at a fair price, it would enable me to protract my residence, which otherwise must soon be brought to an end."

"There is one bond of fellowship between us, then," said Mr. Ford, smiling; "that of poverty. I, too, am working on in present need, hoping some day to achieve success, and with it money. But in one respect I have the advantage of you. My little daughter, here," placing his hand affectionately on Helen's head, "cheers me with her presence and sympathy, and is of more substantial help besides. I don't know what I should do without her."

"O father!" said Helen.

"It is all true, my child. Even now, she has obtained an engagement to sing at the theatre, chiefly, as I think, though she will not admit it, because she thinks the money will be of use to me."

"Indeed!" said the young artist. "I observed in this morning's paper a very flattering account of the *début* of a young singer bearing your daughter's name, but I had no idea it was she. Wait a moment, here it is."

The young man pointed out the paragraph to Mr. Ford, who read it with proud gratification. It was pleasant to him to find that the daughter who was so dear to him should be appreciated by the public.

"Helen, I shall become proud of you," he said.

"And I shall return the compliment, papa,—you know when. Papa, I want to whisper to you a moment."

"Certainly, my dear; that is, if Mr. Coleman will excuse the impoliteness."

"Don't mention it, sir. I hope you will consider me so far a friend, as to treat me unceremoniously."

"Mr. Coleman," said Mr. Ford, after his whispered conference with Helen, "my daughter desires me to invite you to dine with us. I trust you will feel inclined to accept the invitation."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the young man, his face brightening up.

"I need hardly tell you that we do not fare very sumptuously."

The young man laughed. "And I need hardly assure you, sir, that I am quite unused to sumptuous fare. Frankly, but for your invitation, my dinner would have consisted of some dry bread and a couple of sausages."

"You can reserve those till to-morrow, then. I really don't know what Helen will give us. She

allows no dictation in the commissary department."

"Now, papa," remonstrated Helen, "what will Mr. Coleman think of me? You are making me out to be a dreadful tyrant."

"I thought it best to put him on his guard. Since you are kind enough to accept our invitation, Mr. Coleman, Helen will knock at your door when dinner is ready. Good morning."

"Good morning, sir. I shall be quite ready for the summons."

The artist went back to his work, but the image of Helen's childish beauty occasionally rose up before him, and he could not help wishing that Heaven had given him such a sister.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MUFFLED FACE.

Apparently brighter days had dawned upon Helen and her father. With Mr. Sharp's loan and Helen's weekly salary they were no longer obliged to practice the pinching economy which, until now, had been a necessity. Helen could now venture to add an occasional luxury to their daily fare without being compelled to consider anxiously how many dollars yet remained in the common purse. The landlady's call for the rent was now cheerfully received. Helen always had the amount carefully laid aside. No one rejoiced more sincerely in their new prosperity than the worthy landlady, who though forced to look after her own interests, had a large heart, full of kindly sympathy for those who were doing their best in the struggle of life.

"I only wish all my lodgers were equally prompt, my dear," she said, one day. "It's really disagreeable to call on some of them; they look as if you were the last person they wanted to see, and pay down their rent just for all the world as if it was something you had no right to, but were trying to exact from them. Now you always look cheerful, and pay me as if it was a pleasure for you to do it."

"And so it is," said Helen, blithely. "But it wasn't so always. I think, Mother Morton, that the pleasure of paying away money depends upon whether you are sure of any more after that is gone."

"I don't know but you are right," said the landlady. "But I know it isn't so with some. There's Mrs. Ferguson used to occupy my first floor front, living on her income, of which she didn't spend half. I suppose she never had less than two or three hundred dollars on hand in her trunk lying idle, but she'd put me off as long as she could about paying, for no earthly reason except because she hated to part with her money. I stood it as long as I could, till one day I told her plainly that I knew she had the money, and she must pay it or go. She took a miff and went off, and I didn't mourn much for her. But, bless my soul! here I am running on, when I ought to be down-stairs giving orders about the dinner."

Mr. Ford invested a portion of his borrowed capital in a variety of articles which he conceived would assist him in his invention. Although to outward appearance success was quite as distant as ever, it was perhaps a happy circumstance for Mr. Ford that he constantly believed himself on

the eve of attaining his purpose. Indeed, he labored so enthusiastically that his health began to suffer. The watchful eyes of Helen detected this, and she felt that it was essential that her father should have a greater variety and amount of exercise. She determined, therefore, to propose some pleasant excursion, which would have the effect of diverting his thoughts for a time from the subject which so completely engrossed them.

Accordingly, one Saturday morning, having no duties at the theatre during the day, she said to her father, as he was about to settle himself to his usual employment, "Papa, I have a favor to ask."

"Well, my child?"

"I don't want you to work to-day."

"Why," said Mr. Ford, half absently; "it isn't Sunday, is it?"

"No," said Helen, laughing; "but it is Saturday, and I think we ought to take a holiday."

"To be sure," said Mr. Ford, thinking that Helen needed one. "I ought to have spoken of it before. And what shall we do, Helen? what would you like to do?"

"I'll tell you, papa, of a grand plan; I thought of it yesterday, as I was looking at the advertisements in the paper. Suppose we go to Staten Island in the steamboat."

"I believe I should enjoy it," said Mr. Ford, brightening up. "It will do both of us good; when shall we go?"

"Let me see, it is eight o'clock; I think we can get ready to take the nine o'clock boat."

Having once determined upon the plan, Mr.

Ford showed an almost childish eagerness to put it into execution; he fidgeted about nervously while Helen was sweeping the floor and setting the room to rights, and inquired half a dozen times, "Most ready, Helen?"

Helen hailed with no little satisfaction this sign of interest on the part of her father, and resolved that if she could accomplish it these excursions should henceforth be more frequent.

By nine o'clock they were on board the boat. A large number of passengers had already gathered on the deck. The unusual beauty of the morning had induced many to snatch from the harassing toils of business a few hours of communion with the fresh scenes of nature. Both decks were soon crowded with passengers. Helen, to whom this was a new experience, enjoyed the scene not a little. She felt her spirits rising, and it seemed to her difficult to imagine a more beautiful spectacle than the boat with its white awnings and complement of well-dressed passengers. They had scarcely found comfortable seats on the promenade deck before the signal was given, and the boat cast loose from the wharf. There is nothing more nearly approaching the act of flying than the swift-gliding movement of a steamboat as it cleaves its way easily and gracefully through the smooth water.

Mr. Ford looked thoughtfully back upon the spires and roofs of the city momentarily receding.

"How everything has changed," he said slowly, "since I last crossed in a row-boat more than twenty years ago! And all this change has been effected by the tireless energy of man. Does it not seem strange that the outward aspect of

inanimate nature should be so completely altered?"

Half an hour landed them at the island. Helen took her father's hand and assumed the office of guide. They gazed with interest at the gay crowds as they availed themselves of the means of amusement which the place afforded. Helen even left her father long enough to take her turn in swinging, and, flushed with the exercise, returned to him. They next sauntered to a wooden inclosure, where wooden horses, each bearing a rider, were revolving under the impulse of machinery. The riders consisted partly of boys, and partly of others who were compelled to labor hard on other days, but had been tempted, by the cheapness of the trip, to a day's recreation.

Leaving Helen and her father to amuse themselves in their quiet way, we turn our attention to others.

Among those who were rambling hither and thither as caprice dictated, was a young man whose pale face and attenuated figure indicated some sedentary pursuit. His face, though intellectual, was not pleasing. There was something in the lines about the mouth which argued moral weakness.

Is this description sufficient to bring back to the reader's recollection Jacob Wynne, the copyist, whose services had been called into requisition by Lewis Rand?

He was better dressed than when last introduced to the reader. The money furnished by Rand in return for his services had supplied the means for this outward improvement. On his arm leaned a young girl, or rather a young wo-

man, for she appeared about twenty-five years of age. He was conversing with her in a low tone, but upon what subject could not be distinguished. She listened, apparently not displeased. They walked slowly, now in one direction, now in another. If they had not been so occupied with one another, they might have observed that they were followed at a little distance by a woman who kept her burning gaze fixed upon them steadily, apparently determined not to lose sight of them a single moment.

This woman seemed out of place in the festive scene into which she had introduced herself. She presented a strong contrast to the gay, well-dressed groups through which she passed without seeming to heed their presence.

She was dressed in a faded calico dress, over which, notwithstanding the heat, a ragged shawl was carelessly thrown. On her head was a sun-bonnet, so large that it nearly concealed her features from view. One or two who had the curiosity to look at the face, so carefully concealed, started in alarm at the hard, fierce expression which they detected there. Her face was very pale, save that at the centre of each cheek there glowed a vivid red spot. It was evident that the heart of this woman was the seat of conflicting passions. She continued to follow Jacob Wynne, with what object it was not evident. It seemed that she did not wish to make her presence known to him, at least in his present company, since, on his casually turning his glances in her direction, she drew her bonnet more closely about her features, so as to elude the closest scrutiny, and with apparent carelessness turned away.

When she saw that his attention was again occupied by his companion she resumed her espionage.

At length they separated for a few minutes. Jacob's companion expressed a wish for a glass of water. Leaving her seated on the grass, he hastened away to comply with her request. The woman who had followed them so closely, as soon as she saw this, moved rapidly towards the companion he had left, and dropped into her lap a few words written in pencil upon a slip of paper. The latter, picking it up in surprise, read as follows: "Beware of the man who has just left you, or you will repent it when too late. He is not to be trusted."

She looked up, but could see no one likely to have given it to her. At a little distance her eyes fell upon a shabbily-dressed woman who was walking rapidly away, but it never crossed her mind that *she* had anything to do with the warning just given. If she had watched longer she would have seen the meeting of this woman with Jacob Wynne, for it was of him she had gone in pursuit. The latter was returning with a glass of water when she threw herself in his path. With a glance of surprise he was about to pass by, when she planted herself again in his way.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AWKWARD INTERVIEW.

Jacob Wynne looked in surprise at the person who so persistently barred his progress, and exclaimed, impatiently, "What means all this

foolery? Stand aside, my good woman, and let me pass."

She did not move.

The scrivener never, for a moment, suspected who she might be. It never occurred to him that she had a special object in accosting him. He could not see her face, for it was still concealed by the bonnet and thick veil she wore.

"There is something for you," he said, throwing down a small silver coin; for he judged that she might be a beggar. "Now stand aside, will you, for I am in haste."

"So you bestow your alms upon me, as upon a beggar, Jacob Wynne," said the woman, with a hard, bitter laugh. As she spoke, she drew aside her veil with an impatient movement, and allowed him a full view of her features.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed, recoiling so hastily as to spill the contents of the glass.

"Yes,—Margaret!" she repeated, in the same hard tone as before. "I dare say you did not expect to see me here."

"What fiend sent you here?" he exclaimed, angrily.

"Is it so remarkable," she said, "that I should wish to be near you?"

"Margaret," said Jacob, with difficulty restraining his anger sufficiently to assume a tone of persuasion, "consider how much attention you will attract, dressed in this uncouth style. Go home; there's a good woman."

He looked uneasily in the direction where he had left his companion, fearing that she might become a witness of this interview.

"Good woman!" she laughed, wildly. "Oh,

yes, you do well to call me that. You are doing your best to make me so." Then changing her tone, "So you are ashamed of my dress. I will not disgrace you any longer, if you will give me money to buy others."

"Well, well! we'll talk about that when we get home. Only walk quietly down to the boat now. You see we are attracting attention."

"And you will come with me?" she said, with a searching look.

"I? no, not at present. I have an engagement," said Jacob, in some embarrassment.

"Yes, I understand," said Margaret, bitterly. "It is with her," and she pointed to the tree under which his late companion was yet seated.

Jacob started.

"You may well start," said Margaret, whose observant eye did not fail to detect his momentary confusion.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, half defiantly.

"Jacob Wynne," she continued, sternly, fixing her penetrating eye full upon him, "tell me who is this woman, and what she is to you. Tell me, for I have a right to know."

She folded her arms and looked like an accusing spirit, as she made this demand. The consciousness of guilt made his physical inferiority the more conspicuous, as he met her gaze uneasily, as if meditating an escape.

"This is no place for the discussion of such matters," he said, in a tone which strove to be conciliatory. "It is all right, of course. Go home quietly, and when I return, I will answer your questions."

He was mistaken if he thought thus to escape. Margaret was in a state of high nervous excitement, and the fear of being overheard by the groups who surrounded them was wholly lost sight of in the intensity of her purpose.

"Jacob," she said, steadily, "this is not a matter to be deferred. My suspicions have been long excited, and now I want an explanation. I cannot live as I have lived. Sometimes I have feared," placing her hand upon her brow, "that my head was becoming unsettled."

"Your coming here to-day is no slight proof of it," he said, hardly. "I think you are right."

She threw off this insinuation, cruel as it was, with hardly a thought of what it meant. She had but one object now, and that she must accomplish.

"Enough of this, Jacob," she said, briefly. "You have not answered my question. This woman,—what is she to you?"

"Suppose I do not choose to tell you," he answered, doggedly.

"I demand an answer," said Margaret, resolutely. "I have a right to know."

The weakest natures are often the most cruel, delighting in the power which circumstances sometimes bestow upon them of torturing those who are infinitely their superiors. There was a cruel malignity in the scrivener's eyes as he repeated, slowly, "You have a right to know! Deign to inform me of what nature is this right."

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, startled out of herself by his effrontery. "Have you the face to ask?"

"I have," he said, his countenance expressing

the satisfaction he felt in the blow he meditated.

Margaret looked at him a moment, uncertain of his meaning. Then she took a step forward and placed her hand on his arm, while she looked up in his face with an expression which had changed suddenly from defiance to entreaty. "Jacob," she said, in a softened tone, "have you forgotten the morning when we both stood before the altar, and pledged to each other eternal constancy? It is ten years since, years not unmarked by sorrow and privation, but we have been the happier for being together, have we not? You remember our little Margaret, Jacob,—how she lighted up our humble home with her sweet, winning ways, till God saw fit to take her to himself? If she had lived, I don't think you would have found it in your heart to neglect me so. Can we not be to each other what we have been, Jacob? I may have been in fault sometimes, with my hasty temper, but I have never swerved from my love for you."

"You are at liberty to do so as soon as you like," he said, coldly.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed; "and this to your wedded wife!"

"That is a slight mistake of yours," he returned, with a sneer, resting his calculating eyes upon her face, as if to mark the effect of his words.

Her hand released its hold upon his arm, and she staggered back as if about to fall.

"My God! what do you mean? What can you mean? Tell me quickly, if you would not have me go mad before your eyes."

"That might be the best way of ending the

matter," said he, with deliberate cruelty. "Nevertheless I will not refuse to gratify your reasonable curiosity. I declare to you solemnly that you are not my wedded wife."

"You would deceive me," she said, with sudden anger.

"Not in this matter, though I acknowledge having deceived you once. The priest who performed the ceremony was so only for that occasion."

Margaret passed her hand across her eyes as if she were trying to rouse herself from some stupefying dream.

"Surely you are jesting, Jacob," she said, at length. "You are only saying this to try me. Is it not so? I will only ask you this once. Are you in earnest?"

"I declare to you, Margaret, that you are not my wedded wife."

"Then," she said in a sudden burst of fury, to which she was urged by the sharpness of her despair. "Then I have only one thing to live for now."

She turned away.

"What do you mean?" asked Jacob, almost involuntarily, her manner producing a vague uneasiness.

"Revenge!"

She drew her tattered shawl closely about her, and, though the heat was intense, actually shivered in her fierce emotion. Jacob looked after her as she walked rapidly away, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and a half feeling of compunction came over him. It was only for a moment, however, for he shook it off, muttering impatiently,—

"Pshaw! what's the use of fretting! It must have come sooner or later. I suppose it was only natural to expect a scene. Well, I'm glad it's over, at any rate. Now I shall have one impediment out of my path."

Jacob's nature was cold and cowardly, and, as may be inferred, essentially selfish. Destitute of all the finer feelings, it was quite impossible to understand the pain which he had inflicted on a nature so sensitive and high-strung as that of Margaret. Nor, had he been able to understand, would the instinct of humanity have bidden him to refrain.

He retraced his steps to obtain another glass of water, for the one in his hand had been spilled in the surprise of his first meeting with Margaret.

"Did you get tired of waiting, Ellen?" he asked, as on his return he presented the glass to his companion.

The suspicions excited in her mind by the mysterious warning had been strengthened by his protracted absence.

"You were long absent," she said, coldly.

"Yes," he replied, somewhat confused. "I was unexpectedly detained."

"Perhaps you can explain this," she continued, handing him the paper she had received.

He turned pale with anger and vexation, and incautiously muttered, "This is some of Margaret's work. Curse her!"

"Who is Margaret?" asked his companion, suspiciously.

"She," said Jacob, hesitating, in embarrassment. "Oh, she is an acquaintance of mine whose mind has lost its balance. You may have

seen her on the ground here. She was muffled up in a shawl and cape-bonnet. She is always making trouble in some unexpected way."

That this was a fabrication, Jacob's confused manner clearly evinced.

"I wish to go home," was the only response. Jacob offered his arm.

It was rejected. They walked on, not exchanging a word.

When they parted in New York, Jacob gave full vent to his indignation, and hastened home to pour out his fury on Margaret, who had so seriously interfered with his plan of allying himself with one for whom he cared little, except that she would have brought him a small property which he coveted. He hurried up-stairs, and dashed into the room occupied by Margaret and himself. He looked about him eagerly, but saw no one.

Margaret had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARGARET'S FLIGHT.

When Margaret left Staten Island after her stormy interview with Jacob Wynne, it was with a fevered brain, and a heart torn with the fiercest emotions. This man, whom despite his unworthiness, she had loved with all the intensity of her woman's nature, had spurned her affection, had ruthlessly thrown it back upon her, and with a cold refinement of cruelty had acknowledged without reserve the gross deception he had practised upon her.

There are some of sensitive natures that would

shrink and die under such treatment. Margaret was differently constituted. The blow was terrible, but she did not give way under it. It hardened her whole nature, and excited in her a burning thirst for vengeance. Strong in hate as in love, there sprang up in her soul a determined purpose, that, as Jacob Wynne had ruthlessly laid waste the garden of her life, she would never rest till she had made his as desolate as her own.

During the half-hour spent from wharf to wharf, she paced the deck of the steamer with hasty strides, her shawl clasped tightly over her throbbing bosom, and her face concealed as before by the capacious sun-bonnet. She heeded not that she was the object of curious attention on the part of her fellow-passengers. She never noticed how sedulously the children avoided coming in her way—what glances, half of wonder, half of awe, they cast upon the tall, stately, ill-dressed woman who strode by them with such an impatient step. She had far other thoughts to occupy her. She could not force herself to sit down. With her mind in such a whirl, motion was absolutely necessary. Her hands were fiercely clenched till the nails penetrated the skin, and caused the blood to flow, but she neither saw the blood nor felt the injury.

At length they reached the slip. She disembarked with the other passengers, and with the same quick, hasty, impatient strides hurried through the streets, choosing instinctively the most obscure and unfrequented, until she reached the lodgings occupied by Jacob and herself.

Here she sat down for a few minutes, and looked about her.

The room was more ambitiously furnished than when first the reader was introduced to it. Jacob's connection with Lewis Rand had given him a push upward, and enabled him to live more comfortably than before. But in this prosperity Margaret had not been permitted to participate. She had asked even humbly for money to provide herself with more comfortable and befitting clothing, but Jacob, with cold selfishness, had refused all her applications. He had grown tired of her, and, as we have seen, had already formed a plan by which he hoped, through marriage, to get possession of a small property which would place his new prosperity on a more permanent footing. His treatment of Margaret, therefore, was only part of a deliberate plan to rid himself of her, and thus remove the only obstacle to the success of his suit. He had not indeed intended to reveal his plans to her until marriage had secured the property he coveted. We have seen how Margaret's jealous espionage forced a premature disclosure of his object, and even defeated it altogether.

Margaret looked about the room, which she had so long regarded as home. Then her eye rested on herself disfigured by the faded and unsightly garments which Jacob's parsimony compelled her to wear, and she smiled,—a smile of such bitter mockery, such deep and woful despair,—that she almost shuddered to see it reflected in the mirror opposite.

"There is no time to waste," she muttered, slowly. "This can be my home no longer. I must do what I have to do and be gone."

She opened a small drawer in the bureau, and

drew out a half sheet of paper. It seemed to have been used for trying the pen, the same names together with particular letters, being several times repeated on it. Among the names that of Rand occurred most frequently.

Margaret smiled—this time a smile of triumph.

"Jacob Wynne! Jacob Wynne!" she repeated to herself, "what would you say if you knew that I hold in my hand the evidence of your crime,—forgery! forgery!"

Her eyes sparkled with vindictive joy.

"You would not sleep so quietly in your bed to-night, Jacob Wynne, if you knew that I hold it in my power to hurl you into prison a convicted forger! Why should I not do it? Tell me that, Jacob Wynne. Why, indeed; shall I have compassion upon you who have had no pity for me? Never! never!"

"When you are in prison," she continued, in a tone of yet deeper vindictiveness, "I will come and visit you, and taunt you with the knowledge that it is to me you owe your disgrace. Think you that *she* will smile upon you then; that she will be ready to stand before the altar as I did? —Heaven help me!—and plight her faith to a convicted forger?"

Margaret's whole nature seemed changed. Her love seemed to have given place to a deadly resentment.

She collected a few articles, and packed them in a small bundle.

Then she took one more glance—a farewell look at what, till now, had been her home, and then pressed her hand upon her heart, while an expression of pain distorted her features. But

this was only for a moment. By a powerful effort of self-control she checked her emotions, and silently went out from the room.

Mile after mile walked Margaret through the crowded city streets, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. All gazed curiously at her, all turned out for her. Now and then some one, more independent than his neighbors, seemed inclined to oppose her progress, and compel her to yield the way; but she moved steadily onwards, and he was obliged to waive his independence, and make way for the singular woman whose stately walk seemed so inconsistent with her miserable attire.

On, on, till the houses became farther and farther apart; on, till the whirl of the great city is lost in the distance, and fields stretch out on either side of the highway.

Still she moves on, never faltering, never showing signs of fatigue.

The skies grew suddenly dark. The rumbling of distant thunder was heard. Vivid flashes of lightning played before her eyes, and dazzled her with their blinding glare; still she moved steadily onward. A tree, shivered by the lightning, fell across her path; she climbed over the trunk which had been rent in twain, and continued her journey without exhibiting a trace of surprise or alarm. There was a conflict raging in her own soul fiercer than the conflict of the elements without; what was the lightning that dazzled her sight to that which had seared her heart? And why should she shrink from the shattered tree, whose own life had been made a yet more fearful wreck?

And now the rain began to fall, not in a gentle shower, but in a fierce, drenching deluge. It soaked through and through her miserable clothing, and fell upon her hot skin. She did not seem to heed even that, but still walked on—on with the same quick, steady pace, as before.

By the wayside was a small cottage, a very small one. There was but one story, and two rooms were all it contained. It stood a few feet back from the road. There was a small yard in front, and behind a small garden, devoted to the cultivation of vegetables.

When Margaret came in sight of this cottage she paused,—paused a moment irresolutely,—and then slowly entered through the open gate into the path which led up to the front door.

She did not knock, but passing the door, stole to the window and looked cautiously in.

The room revealed to her gaze was very plainly furnished. The floor was clean, but had no carpet. A table and a few chairs, a clock, a stove, and a rocking-chair, were all that the room contained.

In the rocking-chair sat an old lady, quietly engaged in knitting. Her back was towards the window, and Margaret could therefore see nothing of her features. At her feet reposed a gigantic cat, with her eyes half closed, purring contentedly.

It was a picture of humble comfort and domestic happiness. The placid look of the old lady seemed to indicate that she had no anxieties to disturb her tranquillity. The cat, too, seemed to feel that dozing was the great work of her existence, as, coiled up on the hearth, she

watched, with winking eyes, the rapid movements of the old lady's fingers.

Such was the general aspect of the room upon which the burning eyes of Margaret now rested. She stood for a brief space peering in with an air of irresolution.

At length she opened the outer door. A moment more, and the door of the inner room yielded to her touch, and she stood upon the threshold.

The old lady looked up from her knitting, and uttered a half exclamation of terror as her eyes rested on the tall, forlorn woman standing before her, with her clothes hanging in wet folds about her person, and her hair falling in wild disorder about her face, from which she had now removed her bonnet. The cat, too, who had been roused from her nap, and who was as much unused to such company as her mistress, stood with her back arched in terror, gazing in dismay at the stranger.

"Who are you?" asked the old lady, tremulously. "What do you want with me?"

Margaret looked at her earnestly, and said, in a low voice:

"You do not know me?"

"No, I don't know you," said the old lady, shaking her head.

"Is it thus a mother forgets her own child?" asked Margaret, looking fixedly at her.

The old lady trembled, she looked with an earnest glance of inquiry at the wild, haggard face of her visitor, and then bursting into tears took a step forward, and opening her arms exclaimed,—

Margaret, my daughter!"

The hard heart melted for a moment, tears gushed from eyes dry before, and the two were folded in a close embrace.

Then the old lady drew back a step, and gazed long and earnestly at her daughter.

"You find me changed, mother," said Margaret, abruptly.

"It is years since we met," was the sad reply. "I might have expected to find you changed."

"But not *such* a change," replied Margaret. "It is not years alone that have wrought the change in me. But you don't—you cannot see the greater change," she continued with rapidity, "that has taken place in my heart. It is a woful change, mother."

Her mother marked, with alarm, the excitement of her manner, her quick breathing, and the flush upon her cheeks.

"Your clothes are wet, Margaret," she said, anxiously. "This terrible storm has drenched you. You must change them instantly, or you will get your death of cold."

"Ah, that reminds me," said Margaret, waywardly, "you haven't admired my clothes yet. They are very rich and becoming, are they not? This shawl," and she lifted up the tattered rag and spread it out, while the rain dropped from it upon the floor, "have you ever seen a more beautiful one? And this dress,"—she held it up in her fingers,—"how much it resembles the soft silk I wore at my wedding—yes, my *wedding*," she repeated, with startling emphasis.

"You are not well, Margaret," said her mother, alarmed at her strange conduct. "You have

caught cold in this storm, and you will be sick if you are not careful."

"Sick! That matters little."

"You might die," urged the old lady, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Yes," said Margaret, reflectively, "I might die, and that would prevent my revenge. I must live for that; yes, I must live for that."

"What do you mean, Margaret?"

"Never mind, mother," said Margaret, evasively, "never mind. I will tell you some time. Now I will place myself in your hands, mother, and try to get well."

"Now you are yourself again," said the old lady, relieved by her calmer tone. "You must take off those wet clothes directly, and put on some of mine. You had better go to bed at once."

Margaret yielded implicitly to her mother's directions. Nevertheless, she was very sick for many weeks. Often she was delirious, and her mother more than once shuddered at the wild words which escaped her.

CHAPTER XIX.

HERBERT COLEMAN.

In course of time Helen's engagement subjected her to a new embarrassment. It was of course late in the evening before she was released from the theatre, leaving her a distance to traverse of more than a mile. At first Martha Grey called for her, but it soon became evident that this was too much for the strength of the poor seamstress. She did not complain, but Helen, with the quick eye of friendship, saw her lassitude and

the air of weariness which she strove in vain to conceal, and would not allow her to continue her friendly service.

"But, my dear child," said Martha, "how will you manage? You ought not to go alone. It would not be proper."

"I will try it," said Helen, though her timid nature shrank from the trial. "If necessary, I must get a lodging nearer the theatre."

"And leave us? I should miss you sadly."

"Oh, I should expect you to come too," said Helen. "We would hire rooms close together. But perhaps it will not be necessary."

So Helen undertook to return from the theatre alone. She might indeed have had her father's escort by asking for it, but she feared it would prove an interruption to his labors, and perhaps deprive him of the rest which he required. But an incident happened on the second evening which convinced her that it was not safe for her to walk home unattended.

Singing at a popular theatre, Helen's face naturally became familiar to those who frequented it. There were some among them who were struck by her beauty, and desired to see her off the stage. It happened that a young man was standing near the door of the theatre one evening when Helen emerged from it. He quietly followed her until she reached an unfrequented side street through which she was obliged to pass, and then pressed to her side.

"Good evening, Miss Ford," he said, accommodating his pace to hers.

Helen looked up startled, and met an unfamiliar face. She remained silent through terror.

"Good evening," repeated her unwelcome companion. "I hardly think you heard me the first time."

"I don't know you, sir."

"Allow me to remedy that. My name is Albert Grover, at your service."

"I beg you will leave me, sir," said Helen, her heart beating rapidly.

"I would rather not, indeed. You are alone, and require an escort."

"I would rather not trouble you, sir; I shall do very well alone."

"It is no trouble whatever—on the contrary, quite a pleasure. Will you accept my arm?"

"No, sir, I would much rather not."

"Upon my word, you are not treating me well. When I announce myself as one of the warmest admirers of your charming voice, I am sure you will not be cruel enough to repulse me. Let me insist, then, upon your accepting my arm for the remainder of your walk."

Helen was quite terrified by the young man's persistency. Too young to fear any peril except the annoyance of the present moment, she felt an apprehension which she could not define.

"Pray, leave me, sir," she said, in accents of entreaty.

"I am sure you don't mean that," returned her persecutor, endeavoring to place her arm in his.

Helen screamed faintly. Her call was instantly answered.

"Leave this young lady alone," said a manly voice, the owner of which seized Mr. Albert Grover with a vigorous grasp.

"Who are you?" demanded the young man endeavoring, but without success, to free himself from his unexpected assailant.

"What you do not appear to be," was the prompt reply, "a gentleman. Are you not ashamed to annoy a defenceless girl?"

"I only meant to see her home," was the sulky reply.

"You can spare yourself the trouble. I will undertake that duty."

"O Mr. Coleman, how glad I am you came up!" said Helen, clinging to her new protector, in whom the reader has already recognized the opposite lodger.

"So am I. But, Miss Ford, do you know how imprudent it is for you to be out at this hour alone?"

"I suppose it is," said Helen; "but I don't know what else to do. Martha Grey used to come for me, but I found it was too much for her. Papa would come, but he works so hard that I don't think he ought to come. And there is no one else."

"I see how it is," said the young man. "I shall come for you myself."

"You, Mr. Coleman! Oh, no, I could not think of troubling you."

"Indeed, it will be no trouble."

"If it were for only one evening. But every evening, it would be too much."

"On the contrary, it will be pleasant for me. I am in my room nearly all day, hard at work. In the evening I cannot work, for painting requires sunlight. So I shall only be taking the exercise I need, and coming for you will give me an object

which will insure my taking the exercise I require. You see, therefore, that it is a selfish arrangement on my part.

"I see that you are very kind," said Helen, gratefully. "I wish there were any way in which I could repay you."

"I have a young sister at home, about your age. If she were situated as you are, I should want somebody to be kind to her. Let me look upon you as my sister."

"I shall be very glad to have you," said Helen, her confidence completely won.

"Then, of course, I shall not call you Miss Ford any longer."

"Why not?"

"Because that would be too formal between brother and sister. I must call you Helen."

"Yes, if you like," said the child, more and more pleased. "It is very pleasant to have a brother."

"Then you will call me Herbert?"

"Is that your name?"

"Yes. Will you call me so?"

"Perhaps so, by and by. I must get used to it, you know,"

"I think that will soon come, for we shall be a good deal together now."

Helen felt quite relieved by this new arrangement. The next evening Mr. Coleman presented himself promptly at the theatre, thereby disappointing Albert Grover, who was in waiting to repeat his annoyance of the previous evening.

"You may as well give it up," said Helen's escort, with a significant glance at the young man. "Henceforth, this young lady will have an

escort able and willing to chastise all who are disposed to offer her annoyance."

Helen clung to his arm with a feeling of unspeakable relief,

"Don't tremble, Helen," said he, kindly. "You are safe with me."

"You are very kind to me," said Helen.

"That is my duty. You have promised to be my little sister, you know."

"Have you begun a new picture yet?"

"Not yet. I thought I could see where I might make some alterations for the better in the picture you have seen. I shall try to get it admitted to the Academy by and by, unless I succeed first in obtaining a purchaser."

"It is so beautiful, I should think it would be easy to find a purchaser."

"If all looked at it with your partial eyes, Helen. But I have no reputation, and an established name goes a great ways."

"But you will become famous some day."

"I hope so, but it will be many years first. I must work for bread and butter before I work for fame."

"Can't you work for both at the same time?"

"I hope so. But sometimes an artist, under the spur of necessity, is compelled to deny his highest aspirations, and work for present profit. From that temptation I am relieved at present," the young man added, laughing, "since my pencil is not yet in demand."

They had now reached the door of the lodging-house, and stumbled up the dark staircase to their rooms.

"Good night, Mr. Coleman," said Helen.

"So it is still Mr. Coleman?"

"Good night, Herbert," said Helen, timidly.

"Good night, little sister. Good night, and pleasant dreams."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CANDLE FLICKERS.

Leaving Margaret to recover slowly at the little cottage under her mother's care, and Helen and her father to the tranquil existence which, though humble, contents them, we pass to a nearer view of Lewis Rand and his uncle, whose last days are imbittered by the artful machinations of his nephew.

We stand before a palace-like structure, fronting on Fifth Avenue, whose imposing exterior scarcely gives an adequate idea of the interior magnificence. But few homes, even in that aristocratic quarter, are more sumptuously furnished. Yet it would be difficult to say how far all this splendor contributes to the happiness of its owner. Happiness is quite independent of wealth and what wealth can procure. Of what avail is it, that curtains of the richest damask keep out the too intrusive sunlight, or that carpets of the finest texture cover the floors, since the shutters are always closed, and the magnificent parlors rarely echo the steps of a visitor? Of what avail is the gallery of really exquisite paintings, selected at an immense cost from European collections? Hidden from the curious eye, lest perchance some harm might come to them, never looked upon by the possessor, they might as well be buried under

ground, so far as concerns the actual enjoyment derived from them.

Mr. Rand has never recovered from the loss of his son. Great as was the shock he experienced from that son's plebeian choice, for such he considered it, he would have made advances towards a reconciliation long before, but for the vigilance and adroit manœuvring of his nephew Lewis. The latter well knew that this would be fatal to his hopes of succeeding as heir presumptive to his uncle's immense wealth. Accordingly, as soon as his uncle's first passionate anger began to show signs of abatement, he was persuaded by Lewis to undertake a European tour. This occupied several years, during which they resided, for different lengths of time, in the principal European capitals. It was at this time that most of the articles of taste and luxury which now adorned the city mansion were first collected.

But there is nothing that can supply to the heart the place of a lost affection. Mr. Rand returned to America restless and unhappy for the lack of that which his own act had driven from him. Had his son been at hand, he would have offered to receive him back, but it was not till some time afterwards that he heard of his being in Chicago. Whether Lewis suspected any disposition to relent is not certain, but, as we have already seen, he thought it politic to give his uncle the impression that his cousin was dead. Of this he did not find it difficult then to convince him, and so, for a time, he breathed easier. But the recent glimpse of Robert had aroused in the father a hope which Lewis found it exceedingly difficult to stifle. To this hope may be attributed

the change in the phraseology of the will, which the nephew had taken such criminal pains to neutralize. He was in perpetual apprehension that his cousin might, by some means, learn the fact of his father's residence in the city, and, in consequence, make an attempt to obtain an interview. This must be avoided at all hazards. The quiet manner in which they lived rendered the chance of discovery a small one, and the present alarming illness of his uncle, which Lewis regarded as a fortunate circumstance, made that chance still smaller.

On a bed in one of the most elegantly furnished chambers in his princely dwelling, reposed Mr. Rand,—let me rather say reclined, for his quick, restless movements indicated anything but repose. His white hair clung disordered about his temples, his features were thin and careworn, and his whole aspect was that of a man whose life is ending in anxiety and disappointment.

Lewis sat by the bedside, coldly scrutinizing the wasted features, as if calculating how long life can retain its hold.

"Will he never die—*never?*" thus ran his thoughts. "It is strange with what tenacity he clings to life; but as long as he remains here, prostrated by sickness, I am tolerably safe. Still, it isn't a bad plan, which I have in train through Sharp. Although the chances are a hundred to one in my favor, the bare *possibility* of miscarriage is sufficient to justify every precaution."

"O that he might die *at once!*" he mentally resumed, looking impatiently at the wasted face. "Then alone will my doubts and anxieties be at an end. Then I shall care little how often I may

meet my cousin Robert. He will have no further power to injure or thwart me. He cannot last long now. It is three days since he has been rational. He must die, and then——"

Lewis rose and paced the room with quick strides, while he indulged in dreams of the uses to which he would apply the rich inheritance, for which he had been plotting and scheming for so many years.

He was interrupted by a feeble voice from the bed.

Lewis turned quickly towards the bed, and the face of the cunning dissembler at once assumed the expression of profound sorrow and sympathy.

"My dear uncle," he said, "I am rejoiced to find that you are once more yourself. How do you feel?"

"Weak, Lewis, very weak," returned the sick man, speaking with difficulty. "I feel that my life is nearing its close."

"Don't say that, uncle," said Lewis, with well dissembled emotion; "I cannot bear to part with you. Live for me, if not for yourself. If you should die, what is there left to me? Through so many years I have renounced all other ties, and devoted myself to you. You must not leave me now."

The artful dissembler applied his handkerchief to his eyes, possibly to hide the gleam of joyful anticipation which he could with difficulty conceal.

"Yes, Lewis," said Mr. Rand, affected by his nephew's apparent emotion; "you have indeed been devoted to me. You will find, after my death, that I have not been ungrateful. Your

affection leads you to wish my life prolonged, but when the tongue falters, and the pulse grows weak, and the throbbing heart is almost still, man should not presumptuously strive to call back the gift which God is about to take away."

"My dear uncle, I am convinced that you are unnecessarily alarmed. You will yet live many years."

"Hope it not, Lewis," said the sick man, who was far from suspecting how unnecessary this admonition was; "hope it not." I know my time is short. At such a time, Lewis, our past actions assume a very different aspect from that in which we have been wont to regard them. Now when it is too late, I can see how by my foolish pride, I have wrecked my own happiness, and perhaps—God forgive me—that of him I loved best in life, my son Robert."

Lewis was uneasy at the turn the conversation was taking, and made an effort to divert it.

"I think, sir," he said, "that you are blaming yourself without adequate cause. Much as I loved my cousin, I am forced to acknowledge that he justly forfeited his claims to your favor and affection."

"Forfeited my affection! And shall we, weak, erring mortals, in our presumption dare to affix such a penalty to what may after all be only an offence against our own unworthy pride? I feel that I was wrong. I should not have condemned Robert's choice without having seen his wife, and if she was really worthy, I should have given my consent."

"But, consider her birth."

"When you come to lie on your death-bed as I

do now," said the sick man, solemnly, "such considerations will dwindle into their proper insignificance. Why should I claim superiority over any being whom the same kind Father has made? When death is near us, our vision becomes clearer. The scales of prejudice are rent away, and we see things as they are."

Lewis was silent. He was seeking some way of diverting the conversation into a less dangerous channel.

"While I have been lying here," resumed Mr. Rand, "I have been haunted by a conviction that Robert is still living, or that he may have left issue."

"My dear uncle," interrupted Lewis; in alarm, "let me entreat you not to disturb yourself by such thoughts; call to mind how direct were the proofs of his death."

"I know all that you would urge, Lewis, but there have been cases where the death of a person of similar name has led to a misapprehension. It may have been so in this case."

"It is scarcely possible."

"Perhaps you are right. My conviction is based rather upon my feelings than upon my reason."

"Better think no more of it, uncle, it will only distress you."

"Have I not done so? For eighteen years I have been striving to drive away the thoughts of my injustice. But it will not do. I *must* think of it, and thinking finds relief in speaking."

"But, even admitting that you have wronged my cousin Robert, which, in justice to yourself I am not willing to allow, consider that your will,

by its provisions, makes ample reparation for that wrong."

"Poor, at best, Lewis. Will it make reparation for the estrangement which for eighteen years has kept apart father and son? That cannot be. And yet I would fain see even this poor atonement made."

"You may rely upon my being guided by your wishes, uncle."

"I doubt it not. Yet it would be a satisfaction if I, who have done the wrong, could have the privilege of repairing it during my life. Oh, that I might have the joy and blessing of seeing my son once more if he yet lives—that I might ask his forgiveness for the wrong I have done him!"

Lewis was seriously troubled at his uncle's pertinacity, and still more by the inquiry which followed.

"Don't you think, Lewis, it would be well to advertise in the daily papers, for Robert Rand or his descendants, if he should have any?"

"It would be useless," said Lewis, shaking his head. "It would only be throwing the money away."

"And what is money to me? Nothing, nothing, compared with the thought I have done something, however little, towards expiating my injustice. I wish, Lewis, you would draw up an advertisement, and see it inserted."

However distasteful this proposal was to Lewis, it would not do to object. He therefore, with an appearance of alacrity, procured writing materials, and prepared such an advertisement

as his uncle desired. He read it to the sick man who signified his approval, and requested Lewis to procure its insertion in the principal daily papers forthwith. This Lewis undertook to do.

But the advertisement never appeared!

Lewis dared not permit this, knowing that his cousin was actually in the city, and that it would be likely to meet his eye.

Had his uncle been in the habit of reading the daily papers, it could not safely have been suppressed. But he was too sick for that, and there was no prospect of his becoming better. He had of course no suspicion of Lewis's double dealing, but trusted implicitly to him. Day after day he inquired anxiously if there was any answer to the advertisement. As often Lewis replied in the negative, and Mr. Rand would sink back upon his pillow with a sigh of disappointment.

Once Lewis ventured to suggest that it would be well to discontinue the advertisement.

"No, no," said his uncle, "let it be continued while I live. And after that I depend upon you to leave no effort unmade to discover some trace of my lost son."

"You know me too well, to doubt that I will follow your instructions to the letter."

"Yes, Lewis," said his uncle. "You have been very kind to me. You deserve all my confidence, and you possess it."

So Lewis continued to keep watch by his uncle's bedside, a daily witness of his restlessness and unhappiness, and knowing full well that in an hour's space, he could bring peace and comfort to the dying man by restoring his son to him; even

at the eleventh hour, he refused to speak the word that could have wrought the blessed change.

God grant that there be not many hearts as hard!

CHAPTER XXI.

A CONSULTATION.

Mr. Sharp was seated in his office. A complacent smile played over his features. Perhaps he was thinking of the adroit manner in which he had secured one hundred dollars of the sum intrusted to him for Robert Ford. The bottle and glass, on the table before him, testified that his present occupation could hardly be considered of a professional character.

While Mr. Sharp was holding up the glass before him, and admiring the rich warm tint of its contents, Lewis Rand quietly opened the door of the office and walked in. Had Mr. Sharp been consulted, he would prefer to have been forewarned of the visit.

"Business driving as ever," remarked Lewis, in his dry sarcastic way, taking in at a quick glance the scene before him.

"Well, yes," said Mr. Sharp, in some embarrassment, putting down his glass, its contents untasted.

It may be remarked, that whenever Mr. Sharp was perplexed, it was his habit to run his hands vigorously through his blushing locks, till they stood upon his head erect, and bristled like so many porcupine quills. By the time this was well over his faculties returned, and "Richard

was himself again." To this he had recourse on the present occasion, immediately after which he resumed his usual air of easy assurance.

"I am, as you see," he remarked affably, "taking my little symposium, in humble imitation of the ancient Greeks and Romans,—'Champagne,' as somebody has said, 'is admirably calculated to clear cobwebs from the brain.'"

"In that case," dryly returned his client, who could not resist the temptation of a hit at his coadjutor, "I advise you by all means to try it."

"Truly," replied Mr. Sharp, who was dimly conscious of the covert sarcasm, but deemed it politic not to notice it directly, "there is no profession that racks the brain like mine, sir. The mightiest intellects of ancient as well as of modern times——"

Mr. Sharp here assumed a standing posture, and was about to pronounce a eulogy upon the different great men who had, during the last twenty centuries, graced the profession which he adorned.

But the lawyer was saved the trouble of proceeding, by the expression of a wish on the part of Lewis to attend to business.

"Certainly, by all means," said Mr. Sharp, briskly resuming his seat, and drawing before him a sheet of blank paper. Business before pleasure, or rather, with me, business is pleasure."

"I have, as you know," Lewis commenced, "lent the sum of three hundred dollars to Robert Ford, through your agency."

"And very liberal it was in you, I am sure," said Mr. Sharp, with benignant approval.

"By no means. I never professed to be a

philanthropist, and I freely acknowledge that in this act I was influenced by any but benevolent motives. It was done solely with a view to promote my own interests."

Here he paused; and Mr. Sharp, while waiting for a further explanation, rubbed his hands and nodded genially, as if to indicate how thoroughly he indorsed the views of his principal.

"I need not remind you," continued Lewis, not heeding this little manifestation, "of how great importance it is to me that Robert Ford, who is the only obstacle between me and his father's fortune, should be kept entirely out of the way of any possibility of meeting his father. Such an encounter fortunately is not very probable, since neither is aware of the other's presence in the city. When, however, I consider how trifling a chance, such for instance as a glance at a Directory, might lead to that knowledge, I feel more and more how essential it is to my interests that some decisive step should be taken. I may say in confirmation of this, that my uncle, whose health is in a very critical state, has conceived a fancy, Heaven knows how, that my cousin is still alive, notwithstanding the evidence of his death in Chicago, which I placed in his hands."

"That is awkward."

"Yes, it is very awkward, especially as he has insisted on my drawing up an advertisement for this precious cousin of mine, and having it inserted in the daily papers."

"And you have done so?"

"Not I. It would be suicidal. I drew up the advertisement, however, as he requested, and he supposes that it has been inserted."

Mr. Sharp surveyed Lewis with a glance of approval. It was a tribute to superior rascality.

"Now I will explain to you," pursued Lewis, "Why I have lent money to Robert Ford. My uncle is dangerously ill; he cannot live many weeks at farthest. It is absolutely essential that some attempt should be made to place my cousin where he cannot do me any harm. If the laws permitted it, I would gladly have him imprisoned for debt. That is, unluckily, out of the question. I have it in my power, however, to annoy him in such a way as perhaps to drive him from the city."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Seize the furniture in execution, either with or without legal sanction. Robert is far from being a man of the world, and there is no risk in going to lengths with him, which would be dangerous with others."

"I have it," said Sharp, eagerly.

"Well."

"Your cousin is quite devoted to a heap of old machinery, out of which he expects to make a flying machine or something of the kind. To seize upon that would be the most serious blow you could inflict upon him."

"I believe you are right. Robert was always a visionary. If that should prove insufficient to drive him away, I will authorize you to offer him some pecuniary inducements in a guarded manner—some remunerative employment which will call him elsewhere, and which he will be the more tempted to undertake if his present occupation is gone. Only let him be kept out of the way until——"

"You are called upon to lament the death of your venerable relation," suggested Sharp.

"Then," pursued Lewis, "he may go where he pleases, so far as I am concerned."

"My dear sir, you should have been a lawyer. You would have been an ornament to the profession," said Mr. Sharp, with complimentary emphasis.

"Rather an equivocal compliment, I am afraid," returned Lewis, dryly. "But in order to carry out this plan of ours, beyond a doubt, we must ascertain that my cousin will be unable to pay the money when called upon."

"I think I may pledge you," said the lawyer, "that you need entertain no apprehensions on that score. From what I have seen I conjecture that at the time of your loan he had but little money on hand, and I know that he has expended a considerable sum since."

"It is best to be certain, however."

"Undoubtedly. I will myself call down there this afternoon, if you think best, and ascertain this point without exciting his suspicions."

"Do so; and should you find the prospect favorable, take measures to have the demand presented to-morrow. If not discharged, you know how to proceed."

"You may rely upon my following your directions to the letter," returned the attorney, as sweeping his fingers once more through his blushing locks, he bowed his client gracefully out.

CHAPTER XXII.

PREPARING THE WAY.

Promptness was one of the valuable characteristics of Mr. Sharp. But no general remark is without its exceptions.

On the present occasion our legal friend decided to call at once on Mr. Ford, in pursuance of the commission which he received from Lewis Rand. It involved a species of double dealing for which Mr. Sharp felt that he had peculiar qualifications.

Taking down from the nail his invariable white hat, he adjusted it somewhat jauntily upon his head, and walked forth with a benevolent smile iradiating his countenance, as if he were meditating some scheme by which he expected to add largely to the sum-total of human happiness. There are others than he who go out with a smile upon the lips, but an evil purpose in their hearts.

The lawyer took his way to Mrs. Morton's lodging-house. He went up-stairs, and entered Mr. Ford's room without ceremony, knowing that Helen would be absent at that hour, and that the habitual abstraction of her father would probably prevent his knock being heard.

"Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Ford," he said, with affability, cordially grasping the inventor's hand. "Still at your work, I see. I could not resist the impulse to call and inquire after your progress. It seems such a welcome relief to come from the close, dusty court-room to this little

retreat of yours. And how are you getting on, my dear friend?"

"I am advancing as rapidly as I anticipated," said Mr. Ford, pausing in the midst of an intricate calculation. "I feel that I have every reason to be encouraged."

"I am delighted to hear it," exclaimed the lawyer, with friendly enthusiasm. "Then you really think that before many years we shall be able to skim from country to country on the wings of the wind, so to speak."

"I have not a doubt of it," answered the inventor, in a tone of quiet confidence. "We already know how great a degree of speed has been attained by our steamers and locomotives, in the face of far greater obstacles than are to be encountered in the case of aërial navigation. The great impediment to the speed of the locomotive is, as you are doubtless aware, the friction that necessarily results from its constant contact with the earth."

Mr. Sharp nodded assent.

"While the speed of the ocean-steamer is in like manner very materially lessened by the resistance of the water."

Mr. Sharp had often been struck by this very thought. Indeed, he had expended considerable time and thought in the leisure stolen from his professional cares in attempting to devise means for remedying to some extent these causes of loss. For, as he had before assured Mr. Ford, though a lawyer by profession, his tastes lay in quite a different direction.

"Now in traversing the air," continued Mr. Ford, "we have the advantage of not being

obliged to contend either with the friction generated by constant contact with the earth, or with the resistance of a foreign element like water. All that needs to be overcome is the resistance of the air, which is no greater than in the other cases, while the other obstacles are removed."

"Very true," said Mr. Sharp, with an air of profound conviction.

"All that is needed to establish aërial navigation on a firm basis is to find some means of steadying and regulating the motion, which no doubt would be incredibly rapid. It is intended that the machine shall partake of the nature of a balloon, as buoyancy will of course be requisite.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Sharp, warmly grasping the hand of the inventor, "nothing could be more clear and lucid than your explanation. The same course of reasoning, if you will permit me to say so, has more than once suggested itself to me, but, if I may be allowed the expression, it is an idiosyncrasy of mine to possess more theoretical than practical ability. Therefore even if my many engagements would suffer it, I doubt whether I should become a successful inventor. You, my dear sir, who so happily combine both, are admirably adapted to that high vocation."

"I ought to succeed," said Mr. Ford, with a little sigh, "if the labor and thought of many years employed in one direction can achieve success."

"I hope," said the visitor, as if the question had just occurred to him, "that you have made

free use of the money it was my privilege to offer you recently."

Mr. Ford replied gratefully, that he had expended about one half of it. He hoped to be able to repay it some day.

"Of course," argued the lawyer to himself, "he could not pay it now. That is what I wanted to know."

"I ought perhaps to mention," he said, carelessly, "that having a large claim unexpectedly presented for payment yesterday, I raised money upon your note, *expressly stipulating* that you should not be called upon for it, as I should be able to redeem it in a day or two."

"You are very kind," said Mr. Ford. "Perhaps I had better return you the money yet remaining in my hands."

"By no means, my dear sir," exclaimed Mr. Sharp, almost indignantly; "shall I recall the humble offering which I have laid upon the altar of science? Nay, I am resolved that my name shall be humbly connected with yours, when the world has learned to recognize your genius, and numbers you among its benefactors."

How was it possible to suspect a friendship so disinterested?

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLOW FALLS.

The next morning found Mr. Sharp closeted with a brother practitioner equally unprincipled with himself. There was this difference between them, however, that while Mr. Sharp concealed

his real character beneath a spacious show of affability and suavity, his companion, whom, by way of distinction, we will call Blunt, was rough in his manners, and had not art enough to compass the consummate duplicity of the other. Indeed, so accustomed was Mr. Sharp to its use, that he did not lay it aside even where he knew it to be useless.

"My dear friend Blunt," he exclaimed, with charming cordiality, "I am delighted to see you looking so well."

"Humph!" was the somewhat dubious rejoinder.

"I should have called upon you instead of sending for you to my office, but I have really been so harassed by business that I could not get a single spare moment."

"And you presumed that I was not overburdened in that way, eh?"

"My dear Blunt," said Mr. Sharp, with wounded feeling, "how can you imagine such a thing?"

"I only judged from what you said. You hadn't time to call upon me, but judged that I had plenty of time to spend in calling upon you."

"My dear Blunt," said Sharp, impressively, "if the extent of a man's business were always commensurate with his merits——"

"We should neither of us stand a very good chance."

"That was not exactly what I intended to say," said Sharp, blowing his nose, "your modesty, my dear Blunt——"

"Modesty! I am sure you're joking now, Sharp, and although my time is not particularly

valuable, I don't care to stand here discussing personal qualities; so if you had any object in sending for me, out with it."

"You are somewhat abrupt in your speech, my dear friend; an evidence of your sincerity, for which no one has a greater respect than myself."

"I have heard," muttered Blunt, "that people are apt to set a high value on qualities which they lack."

"However," pursued Sharp, evading a reply to his last remark, "I have a little professional business to offer you, if your engagement will permit."

"No fear on that score," said Blunt, dryly; "but this business—why don't you do it yourself? You needn't tell me it's on account of a pressure of the other engagements, for I know better."

"That is not the reason, as with your usual penetration you have discovered, my dear Blunt. Do not for a moment think I would attempt to deceive you. With others it might do; but with you I know there would be no chance of succeeding."

Mr. Sharp nodded with pleasant affability to his visitor, and resumed: "The fact is, it is a matter in which I do not wish to appear. One of my clients (Mr. Sharp brought out these words with an emphasis calculated to convey the idea that it was one of a very large number), for a reason which I need not mention, employed me some weeks since to lend a sum of money to a certain individual. This was only to establish a power over him which, some time, it might be

convenient to use. That time has come; it is his desire that the note should be presented with a demand for immediate payment, in default of which a particular article in possession of the borrower should be seized in execution. This, as you may readily imagine, would have a tendency to harrow up my feelings, and ——"

"Therefore you intrust the business to me, who have no feelings to be harrowed up."

"My dear Blunt, I desire you to undertake this, because of your superior strength of mind. I am well aware of my own deficiency in that respect."

"Well, well, have it as you will. I won't trouble you to assign reasons for throwing business into my hands. I sha'n't let any scruples stand between me and my own interest. Where's the note!"

"One thing more," said Sharp, slowly unclasping the wallet which contained the note. "This man—Robert Ford—thinks I lent him the money on my own responsibility, and naturally regards me as a firm friend. I called on him yesterday, and hinted that I had been forced to raise money to meet a pressing engagement, and had given up this note as collateral, on condition that it should not be presented. Very probably he may mention this. I don't wish him to suspect that there is any understanding between us, as it will destroy what little influence I may have over him. You will be kind enough, therefore, to say nothing to undeceive him on that point, and if you could make it convenient to abuse me a little, just to show that there is no collusion between us, I should regard it as a particular favor."

"Abuse you! I will do it with the greatest pleasure in the world."

"I knew it, my dear Blunt; it was what I expected of your friendship. But I must give you his direction. Have you all necessary instructions?"

"You have not told me what I am to seize on execution?"

"Very true, an important omission. You must know that this Ford, an estimable man, by the way, has taken a fancy to invent a flying machine, and to that end has collected an odd jumble of machinery. This is what I wish you to seize. Here is the address."

"And where am I to bring it?"

"You may as well bring it here."

"How unfortunate that you cannot complete the invention," said Blunt, dryly. "If it is just as convenient I shouldn't mind receiving the pay in advance; not," he continued, with a pointed imitation of his companion's manner,—"not that I doubt in the least your high-souled integrity, my dear Sharp, but simply because, just at present, singularly enough, I happen to be out of cash."

"I shall be most happy to discharge your claim forthwith," said Sharp, rather ostentatiously displaying a roll of bills, and placing a five in the hands of his agent.

Blunt examined the bill with some minuteness, a sudden suspicion having entered his mind as to its genuineness. Satisfied on this point, he slipped it into his vest pocket, saying, "All right, you shall hear from me in the course of the day."

An hour afterwards a loud authoritative knock

aroused Robert Ford, who, it is needless to say, was employed after his usual fashion.

"Come in!"

The invitation was quickly accepted by a shock-headed man, stout and burly, who without ceremony drew out a note, and said, abruptly, "You are Robert Ford, I presume?"

"That is my name, sir," said the inventor, in some surprise.

"Very well. Here is a note with your signature, payable on demand. I presume it will be perfectly convenient for you to pay it now."

Mr. Ford took the note with an absent air, and said, glancing at the man before him, "Excuse me, but I do not recollect having seen you before."

"Very probably," said Blunt, with *sang froid*. "We never had the pleasure of meeting before."

"Then," said the inventor, "how comes it that you have a demand against me?"

"If you will take the trouble to examine the note, you will find that it comes through a third person, Richard Sharp. You probably remember him."

"Yes, I know him."

Mr. Ford glanced at the paper in his hand.

"I think there must be some mistake," he said. "The sum should be two hundred dollars, not three."

"There is no mistake," said Blunt, positively. "It is just as he gave it to me."

"Mr. Sharp mentioned yesterday," said Mr. Ford, with a sudden effort at recollection, "that he had parted with this note to some one, but on

condition that it should not be presented. You had better see him about it."

"I have nothing further to do with him," replied Blunt. "I believe he did mention something of the kind; but of course he cannot expect me to keep this note when I want the money."

"Then, sir," said Mr. Ford, "if, as you admit, Mr. Sharp made this condition, it is incumbent on you, as a man of honor, to keep it. I am sure it is very far from Mr. Sharp's intention to trouble me for the payment of a sum which he loaned without the expectation of immediate repayment. I should wrong his disinterested generosity by harboring such a suspicion."

"His disinterested generosity!" repeated Blunt, with a loud laugh.

"Sir," said the inventor, with calm dignity, "I must request you to forbear insinuating by word or manner anything derogatory to a man who has proved himself my benefactor, and, solely impelled by his interest in science, has offered me the aid of his purse, without even an application on my part."

"Very well," said Blunt, "although it's rather amusing to me to hear Sharp spoken of as interested in science, I won't quarrel with your opinion of him, especially as his character isn't in question just now. The main point is, can you pay this note?"

"I cannot."

"Then I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of calling two of my friends in waiting."

Two Irishmen, who appeared to have been waiting outside, entered at Blunt's call.

"Take that machinery," said Blunt, in a tone of command, "and carry it down-stairs."

"Stay!" said Mr. Ford, in alarm; "what do you intend to do?"

"I am only acting in self-defence," said Blunt, doggedly. "You cannot pay your money. If I can't get my pay in one way, I must in another; therefore, I take this machinery of yours in execution."

The thought of this calamity nearly overcame Mr. Ford. He did not pause to consider whether the seizure was legal or illegal, but, in an agitated voice, urged, "Take everything else, but spare me this. It is to me of inestimable value,—greater than you can possibly imagine."

"That's the very reason I take it," said Blunt. "All the rest of your trumpery," glancing contemptuously at the plain furniture, "wouldn't be worth carrying away."

"At least," implored the inventor, "wait till to-morrow, till I can see Mr. Sharp."

"And where would you be?" sneered Blunt. "Don't think to catch me with such chaff; I'm too old a bird. I will take it while it is here."

"But," urged Mr. Ford, "it can be of little value to you. You cannot sell it for one quarter of the debt."

"Perhaps not. But that isn't what I take it for."

"What then?"

"As a pledge for its final payment. I care nothing for the trumpery, while you, I know, do. When you come forward and pay the note, you shall have it back again."

"Do you promise that?" asked the inventor, more cheerfully.

"I will agree to wait a reasonable time."

Little ceremony was used in the removal of the complicated machinery. Within ten minutes, all that had so fully occupied the thoughts of Mr. Ford, and furnished the pleasure and the occupation of his quiet life, was swept away, and he was left alone. That the labor was to no purpose, and the hopes which he cherished vain, imported little. To him, at least, they were realities, and upon them he had built a dazzling superstructure, which now suddenly crumbled into pieces at his feet.

Lewis Rand's triumph was thus far complete.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HELEN'S GOOD FORTUNE.

Mr. Bowers, the manager, sat at his desk in the little office adjoining the stage, running his eye over a manuscript play presented for examination by an ambitious young man in spectacles.

"Bah!" said the manager, tossing aside the play after a very brief examination, "what can the man be thinking of? Two murders in the first act, and a suicide in the first scene of the second! Such an accumulation of horrors will never do. Here, Jeffries."

The messenger made his appearance, and stood awaiting orders.

"Here," said Mr. Bowers, tossing the play

towards him, "just do this thing up, and when the author calls this afternoon, tell him from me that it is a very brilliant production, and so on, but, like Addison's Cato, for example, not adapted for dramatic representation. That will sugar the pill."

"Is it the tall young man, with a thin face?"

"Yes; his name is Ichabod Smith; but he writes under the *nom de plume* of Lionel Percy."

"Yes, sir; I have seen his name in the story papers. He has just written one called 'The Goblin Lover; or, The Haunted Tower.'"

"Any further orders, sir?" inquired Jeffries, deferentially.

"Has Miss Ford come?"

"No, sir; I think not."

"Notice when she does, and request her to call at the office a moment."

"Yes, sir."

"It is no more than fair that I should increase her salary," soliloquized Mr. Bowers. "She has really proved quite a card, and richly deserves double what I have hitherto paid. Besides," he mused, for the manager was by no means neglectful of his own interests, "I should not be surprised if another establishment should try to entice her away by a larger offer. I must bind her till the end of the season."

At this moment Helen was announced by Jeffries.

She entered, not without a little feeling of embarrassment. She had not often been brought into communication with Mr. Bowers, since her engagement, and now the only reason that occurred to her to account for this unexpected sum-

mons was, that she might in some way have given dissatisfaction, although the applause which greeted her nightly seemed hardly consistent with this idea.

Her apprehensions were at once dispelled by the unusually gracious manner in which she was received.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Ford," said Mr. Bowers, affably; motioning her to a seat. "I have sent for you to say that your services are in the highest degree acceptable to me and to the public. The marks of approval which you receive nightly must be very gratifying to you as they are to me."

Quite overpowered by this extraordinary condescension on the part of the manager, whom she had been accustomed to regard with a feeling of distant awe and respect, Helen answered that she was very glad that he was satisfied with her.

"To prove how highly I value your services," continued Mr. Bowers, "I have decided to double your weekly salary, provided you will sign an engagement to remain with us till the end of the season."

Helen, who had feared on being summoned to the manager's presence, that it was to be told that her services were dispensed with, hardly knew how to express her gratitude for what was so far beyond her expectations.

"It is very generous in you, sir," she said, "to increase my salary without my asking for it."

"I always make it a point," was the reply, "to recompense merit to the extent of my means."

"And now," he added, pushing towards her a contract already drawn up, "if you will sign this

obligation to sing for me the remainder of the season on these terms, I shall have no further cause to trespass on your time."

Helen wrote her name hastily, and withdrew from the manager's presence, it being already time for rehearsal.

"A very pretty little girl, and not at all aware of her own value," mused Mr. Bowers. "I am lucky to have secured her."

Eager to communicate her increase of salary to her father and good Martha Grey, who had always shown so warm an interest in her welfare, Helen hastened home immediately after rehearsal.

Flushed with exercise, and with a bright smile playing over her face, she danced into Martha Grey's little room.

"O Martha!" she ejaculated, sinking into a chair, "I am all out of breath running, I was so anxious to tell you of my good fortune. You are the very first that I wanted to tell it to."

"What is it, Helen?" inquired Martha, looking up from her never-ceasing work with an expression of interest.

"What do you think it is? Guess now," said Helen, smiling.

"I never was good at guessing, Helen. I think the shortest way will be to tell me at once."

"I have had my salary raised to twelve dollars a week; just think of that, Martha: and all without my asking. I shall be able to buy ever so many nice things for papa, now, that I couldn't afford before; and I mean to make you a present, besides, Martha; you've been so very kind to me."

"Thank you for the kind thought, my dear

child. I will take the will for the deed. But you mustn't think yourself too rich. If you have any money to spare you had better be laying it up against a time of need. Remember the theatre will be closed for a time in the summer, and your salary will stop. You will want to lay up money to carry you through that time."

"At any rate, Martha, if you won't let me spend any money for you, I shall insist on coming in now and then and helping you with your work, so that you can gain time to walk out with me. I am afraid you work too hard. You are looking pale."

"It is long since I had much color," said Martha. "You have enough for us both."

"Then you must go out and get some. But I mustn't stop a minute longer; I must go up and tell papa;" and she bounded up-stairs with a light heart, little suspecting what had taken place during her absence.

What was her surprise to find her father listlessly looking out of the window into the little court below, and otherwise quite unoccupied.

"What is the matter, papa?" inquired Helen, in apprehension; "and where," for the first time noticing the absence of the work which usually engaged her father,—"where is your machine?"

"It is gone, my child," said Mr. Ford, despondently.

"Gone! what do you mean, papa? You have not got discouraged, and sent it away?"

"Discouraged! No, Helen; on the contrary, I never felt nearer success than I did a few hours since. But all is changed now."

"What *has* become of it, papa?" questioned Helen, in increasing alarm.

"It has been seized for debt, Helen."

"For debt?"

"Yes; for the note which I gave Mr. Sharp. I had not the money to pay it, so they carried off my machine for security."

"Is it possible he has been so cruel and unfeeling?" exclaimed Helen, indignantly.

"Do not blame him, my child. I am convinced that it is far from his intention to trouble or distress us. But he parted with the note a day or two since, as he himself told me, on the express condition that it should not be presented for payment, and this stipulation has been disregarded."

"And how large was this note, papa?"

"For three hundred dollars."

"*Three* hundred! I thought it was only two hundred that were lent you."

"That was my own impression," said Mr. Ford, with an air of perplexity. "But you know," he continued, with a melancholy smile, "that I have no head for business. I have been so occupied in other ways. It is quite possible that I have made a mistake."

"I am afraid," said Helen, gravely, "that Mr. Sharp is not so much your friend as you imagine."

"Not my friend, Helen? He offered to lend me this money voluntarily, without any expectation of immediate return. I am certain that when he hears of this affair, he will hasten to make it right."

"Perhaps I do him wrong," said Helen, thoughtfully, "and indeed I do not know what

good it would do him to annoy us. But, papa, there is one thing I haven't told you,—a piece of great good news. I have had my salary doubled at the theatre. I shall earn twelve dollars a week. Think of that papa."

"But are you not working too hard, Helen?"

"I, working hard! It is only a pleasure for me to sing. I am very lucky in being paid for what I would rather do than not. It is different with poor Martha. She doesn't earn more than four dollars a week, and has to sit at her sewing from morning till night. I wish I could do something to help her. She looks so tired and pale all the time."

"God has favored you, my child, in bestowing upon you so choice a gift. I hope you do not fail to thank him for this goodness."

"Never, papa. I thank him every night."

"How much money have you left, papa?" she inquired, after a pause.

"I don't know exactly how much. I had better give it to you to help pay our daily expenses."

"There are one hundred and twenty dollars," said Helen, counting it. "Then we shall need one hundred and eighty to make up the balance of the sum mentioned in the note."

"Surely, I cannot have expended that sum," said Mr. Ford, with a perplexed look. "If I could see Mr. Sharp!"

"I will go and see him, papa."

"Perhaps it will be best."

In five minutes Helen was on her way to the lawyer's office.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR SHARP CHANGES HIS BASE.

When Lewis Rand made choice of Richard Sharp, a briefless barrister, as his agent, in preference to a lawyer of greater reputation, he was influenced by what he considered satisfactory reasons. In the first place, Mr. Sharp's easy morality and lack of principle were no unimportant qualifications for the business in which he was to be employed; that he had good qualities of a particular kind Lewis knew; and he judged that his lack of other clients would insure his devotion to his interests.

Thus far, Mr. Sharp's management of the business intrusted to him had quite equalled Lewis Rand's expectations. He acknowledged that it could not have been better done. Feeling that the lawyer's fidelity was insured by his own interest, he was far from anticipating any risk to his plans from this quarter.

Lewis Rand reasoned as a man of the world, showing, it must be admitted, no inconsiderable insight into human character and motives. But there was one thing which he neglected to take into the account. The lawyer might, in the course of his investigations, discover counter interests, which he might think it better worth his while to further than his client's.

This was actually the case.

Lewis Rand had so far taken Mr. Sharp into his confidence, that the lawyer found little diffi-

culty in surmising how affairs stood. Of the forged will he was ignorant. It appeared that the only thing which stood in the way of a reconciliation between Robert Ford and his father, was the careful manner in which they had hitherto been kept apart by Lewis. As the latter had confessed, his uncle had been so far desirous of a meeting and reconciliation, that he had ordered an advertisement to be inserted in the leading papers, notwithstanding the probability that his son was no longer living.

"Now," thought Mr. Sharp, "what would be the probable consequence, if some person—I, myself, for example—should bring together the long-separated father and son. Naturally that person would have the satisfaction of knowing that he had made two fellow-beings happy,"—here Mr. Sharp looked fairly radiant with benevolence,—"and also,"—here came in a consideration,—"and also he would stand a chance of being very handsomely rewarded."

Mr. Sharp lit a fresh cigar, after which he resumed the current of his reflections.

"Suppose I should be that person. I should, of course, lose my present client; but, on the other hand, I might get another, who would prove ten times as profitable to me. In fact, he could not very well help rewarding me handsomely, knowing that I had been the means of gaining him a fortune. Besides, this Ford is a mere infant in matters of business. Of course he would need somebody to manage his money concerns for him, or he would be fleeced on every hand. It would only be an act of common humanity to come to his assistance. Egad!" exclaimed the

lawyer, warming with the thoughts of what might be done should the scheme succeed; "the thing's worth trying, and I'll be ——, I mean I'll try it."

Having arrived at this praiseworthy decision, Mr. Sharp tossed the remains of his cigar into the grate, and carefully adjusting his invariable white hat, sallied into the street on a tour of observation.

The object of his quest was the residence of his client. A look into the directory guided him to the residence on Fifth Avenue, which has been already described. He observed that the shutters were closed, as befitted a dwelling in which there was sickness. From the sidewalk he could read the name upon the door-plate. There could be no mistake, for this name was Rand.

"So far so good," he thought, and having now obtained all the information he at present needed, he wended his way back to the office, and began to meditate what step next to take, when he caught the sound of a timid knock at his office door.

"Come in!" said Mr. Sharp, wondering if by some very extraordinary freak of fortune it might be a second client.

The door was opened, and Helen stole timidly in.

She looked very sad and despondent. The length of time which must elapse before she could at best release her father's treasured machine, and furnish him the wonted occupation which had so long engrossed his time and thoughts, and upon which he founded such high hopes of fame and fortune, naturally weighed upon her mind.

She had come to acquaint Mr. Sharp with what had happened, rather because such was her father's desire than because she entertained any great hopes of his assistance.

"Miss Ford," exclaimed Mr. Sharp, jumping from his seat and, with a wave of the hand, politely tendering it to Helen, "This is a most unexpected pleasure. I am delighted to see you, my dear young lady; pray, sit down, if you will do such an honor to my humble apartment."

"I couldn't stop, sir, thank you," said Helen. "I came to let you know, sir, at my father's desire, that his,—I mean the work he was engaged upon,—has been seized for debt."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Sharp, in the greatest apparent amazement; "how did it happen?"

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer in a tone of virtuous indignation, "is it possible that Blunt has had the unparalleled effrontery to disturb my esteemed friend, your father, against my express stipulation? That man little knows that he has aimed a blow at science and the world's progress, and endangered the successful prosecution of the greatest discovery of modern times. And all for the sake of a little paltry money!" ejaculated Mr. Sharp, with disdain. "And shall this be permitted? No, it shall not be! It must not be!"

Here Mr. Sharp brought down his fist energetically upon the table.

"My dear young lady, rest assured that your father shall be righted, even though—yes, even though it strip me of my entire property."

It may be remarked that the lawyer's entire

property, which he was ready to sacrifice so heorically in the service of his friend, made but a small show on the tax-gatherer's book.

Nevertheless Helen, who gave him credit for perfect sincerity, began to think she had judged very harshly of Mr. Sharp, and the delightful hope that through his means would once more be restored to her father the employment so necessary to his happiness, filled her with the liveliest emotions of gratitude.

"O sir," said she, earnestly, "we will both pray for and bless you."

"My dear Miss Ford," said the lawyer, in his emotion brushing away an imaginary tear, "say no more. Although you will, I know, acquit me of having had anything to do directly in bringing about your father's misfortune, it was, I am painfully conscious, the result of my entrusting the note to that villain Blunt, who has acted in a manner unworthy of a gentleman,—in a manner which will compel me to break off all business relations with him in future; I feel that it is my duty to do what I can to repair the results of my indiscretion."

Mr. Sharp rose rapidly in Helen's estimation. The respect with which he spoke of her father, and the warmth with which he espoused his interests, impressed the unsuspecting child most favorably. She began to wonder how she could ever have thought of him otherwise than as a friend. She even felt a degree of compunction and self-reproach for having harbored suspicions of so excellent a man.

"You can return home quite at ease, my dear Miss Ford," resumed Mr. Sharp. "Within two

hours at most I will take care that your father's property shall be restored to him."

"Will you, sir?" said Helen, her eyes lighting up with gratitude. "Oh, I shall feel so relieved. We shall be very much indebted to you."

"Do not thank me, my dear Miss Ford. I feel that I am, in some respects, unsuited to my profession. A lawyer should be made of sterner stuff. I rejoice that your father should have sent to me immediately. It is a proof of his confidence, which I value. He will always find in me a true friend, and I trust he will not fail to call upon me for assistance whenever any trouble shall befall him. Your father, my dear Miss Ford, is a man of genius; but, as you perhaps have observed, is not so well versed in the ways of the world as those who possess not a tithe of his inventive talent and intellectual ability."

Helen was quite ready to acknowledge a deficiency which no one knew better than herself.

"Mind, my dear young lady," continued Mr. Sharp, "I do not speak of this as in any way derogatory to your father or at all detracting from his scientific eminence. I would not have him other than he is. No one can be great in all things, as Cicero so eloquently observes. What if your father is a little deficient in worldly sagacity? Was not this the case with all who have distinguished themselves in the higher departments of science and literature? Why, the great Sir Isaac Newton himself was noted for his absence of mind, and some very curious stories are told of this trait. Milton, too, knew so little how to drive a bargain, that he actually sold his great poem for five pounds. So I consider your

father's want of practical talent one of the most convincing proofs of his superior mental endowments."

Whatever may be thought of Mr. Sharp's reasoning, it was enough for Helen that he spoke in praise of her father, whom she revered. No praise of herself could so effectually have won her entire confidence. With light heart she left the lawyer's office, and hastened home to impart to her father the glad tidings.

"I have crossed the Rubicon," said Mr. Sharp, thoughtfully. "I must now arrange the details of my *coup d'etat.*"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SHORT CHAPTER.

Mr. Sharp had now taken the first step towards betraying his client, and was determined not to turn back. Having so far committed himself, he felt that policy dictated expedition. Should Mr. Rand suddenly die before he could bring about an interview between him and Mr. Ford, all would be lost. That interview must take place with the least possible delay.

Mr. Sharp, accordingly, set out at once for Mr Ford's dwelling.

A moderate walk brought him to the modest lodging of the inventor.

He paused a moment to compose his face to the proper expression of sympathetic regret, and then entering, grasped the hand of Mr. Ford.

"I sympathize with you sincerely in your misfortune," he remarked, in a feeling tone, "and it is to me a poignant reflection, that it has occurred partly through my means; but I trust your kindness will absolve me from any suspicion of complicity."

"I do, and have," said Mr. Ford, frankly, extending his hand. "From the first, I could not even imagine, Mr. Sharp, that you had anything to do with it."

"You only do me justice," said Mr. Sharp, wringing the offered hand with affectionate energy; "you only do me justice, sir, and yet I have been culpable; I have been guilty of an indiscretion; I should not have intrusted a note which affected your interests, to so unscrupulous a man as Blunt. Mild as is my temperament," he continued, with a sudden burst of ferocity, "I do not hesitate to pronounce that man an unmitigated villain."

He paused a moment to recover himself, and resumed in a different tone, with a look of respectful admiration directed towards Helen.

"As soon as I heard the details of this affair from the lips of your charming daughter, whose filial devotion is, I may observe, the most beautiful trait of her character, I hastened here to assure you of my sympathy and assistance. I think I may promise, that your invaluable machinery will be restored to you before night. I can only express my extreme regret that you have been compelled to suspend your labors, even for the space of a few hours."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Mr. Ford, gratefully. "I shall always feel that I am deeply

indebted to you for your disinterested friendship."

"Sir," said Mr. Sharp, visibly affected, "I would, if it were possible, express how much I am gratified by your words; but there are feelings which must be hidden in the heart, and to which no language can do justice. Let me say, briefly, that such are my feelings on the present occasion. You have been pleased to refer to the little service which it has been in my power to render you. But, sir, you have no cause for gratitude. It is the interest I feel in the advancement of science, to which you have consecrated your life energies. It is my earnest desire to help forward, in my way, the important discovery which is to hand down your name to future generations."

"If you will excuse me," said Helen, putting on her bonnet, "I am going out to get something for dinner; and if," she added, hesitatingly, "Mr. Sharp would do us the favor to sit down with us, papa, I am sure we should be very glad to have him."

"That is well thought of, Helen," said her father, approvingly. "I shall be very glad to have Mr. Sharp do so, if he can find sufficient inducement."

"Sufficient inducement!" echoed the lawyer, with the air of a man who had received an invitation to a royal banquet; "I shall be most proud, most happy, to accept your invitation, and that of your charming daughter. Unworthy as I feel myself of this distinction, I will yet accept it."

"Unworthy! you, who have to-day shown your-

self so truly my friend? It is but a faint expression of our gratitude."

"You are very kind to say so," said Mr. Sharp, with an effusion of feeling. "Yet I cannot help feeling that you judge me too favorably. Indeed, were it not that I have a revelation of some importance to make to you, I should scarcely venture to accept your invitation."

"Be seated, Mr. Sharp," said Mr. Ford, somewhat surprised at the lawyer's words; "I shall, of course, feel interested in anything you may have to impart. Helen, my dear, you will not be gone long?"

"No, papa."

She closed the door, and descended the stairs, with her market-basket on her arm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HELEN'S BANQUET.

When Helen had departed on her errand, Mr. Sharp commenced,—

"You will pardon me," he said, "if, in the preliminary inquiries I may have to make, there may be anything of a nature to harrow up your feelings, or recall painful scenes."

Mr. Ford looked surprised.

"May I inquire if you have a father living?"

A painful shadow flitted over the face of Mr. Ford. He answered, presently,—

"You may be surprised when I answer, that I do not know."

"I am *not* surprised," said Mr. Sharp, inclining his head gently. "This was the answer I anticipated."

Once more Mr. Ford regarded his visitor with a look of surprise.

"Is it possible," he said, not without hesitation, "that you should know anything of my unhappy history?"

"Of that you shall judge. What if I should say, for example, that the name by which you are known is not your real one?"

"I cannot conjecture where you obtained your information, but it is correct. My real name is not Ford."

"And is—Rand."

"You are right; but how——"

"A moment, if you please. I have more to tell you. You were born to wealth, and being an only son, were sole heir to your father's possessions. You were not, however, without a companion,—a cousin, whom your father generously took under his charge."

"Lewis?"

"Yes, Lewis Rand; he shared your studies and your sports, and was, in all respects, treated like yourself. The only difference was in your prospects. You were to inherit a large fortune, while he——"

"My father would have provided for him."

"No doubt, but not equally. That would not have been expected, of course. When Lewis grew old enough to understand this, it filled him with envy and jealousy."

"Can this be true?" asked Robert Ford,—to call him by the name to which we are accustomed,

—"can this be true? yet he was always cordial and friendly. His manner never afforded any ground for suspecting that he cherished such feelings."

"He knew his own interests too well for that. Inferior as his prospects were, they all depended upon your father's good-will. It would, therefore, have been in the highest degree unwise, to disclose a feeling sure to alienate it."

"Perhaps you are right," said Mr. Ford, thoughtfully.

"Therefore, he only nursed this feeling in secret. Yet he none the less watched for an opportunity to injure you. His patience was at length rewarded. That time arrived."

Robert Ford, as if half surmising what was to follow, rose in some agitation, and began to pace the room.

"I trust," said Mr. Sharp, "you will excuse me for introducing a delicate subject. There is a time when the susceptible heart of a young man first yields to the tender passion."

"I understand you," said Mr. Ford, in a low voice.

"Am I right in saying, that however nobly adorned in other respects, the object of your attachment was not wealthy?"

Mr. Ford bowed his head.

"Unfortunately for your happiness, your father wished you to wed a wealthy wife, and withheld his approbation from your choice. You, my dear sir, with a magnanimity, which, I am sure, does you infinite credit, clung to your chosen bride, portionless though she was, and, in

spite of your father's disapprobation, married her."

"I did," said Robert Ford, with emotion; "and however grieved I may have been, and still am, at my father's continued resentment, that step I never regretted. You have seen Helen. It may have been a parent's partiality, but I have always regarded her as uncommonly sweet and attractive."

Mr. Sharp, in a very high-flown eulogium, intimated that such was his own estimate.

"When I tell you," pursued Mr. Ford, "that Helen bears a very striking resemblance to her mother, not in person only, but in sweetness and amiability, your heart will suggest an excuse for my perhaps unfilial conduct."

"Sir," said Mr. Sharp, warmly, "had you done otherwise than you did, had you abandoned, at the bidding of a paltry self-interest, the heart that had learned to love and trust you, I should not have felt one half the respect for you which I now entertain. But, to resume my story. The first difficulty between your father and yourself was hailed with delight by your cousin. It was an occasion for which he had long been watching. It is needless to say, that he used every means to widen the breach, so artfully, however, as not to allow either your father or yourself to suspect his purpose. Possibly you can recall some circumstances which will confirm what I have said."

"I remember," said Robert, thoughtfully, "that my cousin professed to sympathize with me most warmly, and counselled me, by all means, to carry out my purpose, in opposition to

my father's will. He assured me that my father would finally yield, when he learned that my heart was unalterably fixed, and that opposition would prove unavailing."

"At the same time," said the lawyer, "he was giving similar assurances to your father. He told him, that when you were satisfied that his consent could not be obtained, you would yield the point, and conform to his wishes."

"Was my cousin indeed so wicked?" asked Robert, with more pain than anger in his tone.

"That was not all. In order to add to your father's indignation, he took care to describe your betrothed in the most odious colors. He not only charged her with poverty, but represented her as an artful and designing country girl, uneducated and unrefined, whose only object in marrying you was to gratify a vulgar taste for finery and ostentation. In fact, he taxed his imagination to the utmost, in the endeavor to portray her in a manner which he knew would render her most unacceptable to the family pride of your father. I should add that he even denied her the charm of personal beauty, and pictured her to your father as equally unattractive in mind and person."

A red spot glowed in the pale cheek of Robert Ford, who, mild as he was, could not hear unmoved this vile slander upon one he loved. To do Mr. Sharp justice, what he said was not exaggerated, but strictly in accordance with truth.

"Are you sure of this?" he asked, pacing the room in a perturbed manner.

"I am. You shall know my authority soon, but not now."

"Now, I am not surprised at my father's con-

tinued resentment. To traduce my Helen so cruelly!"

"You will not wonder that all this should have had the effect intended,—that of confirming your father in his opposition. You married, and left this part of the country."

"Yes; I went to the West."

"And did you hear nothing from your father afterwards?"

"Never, directly."

"Yet you had not been married six months before he began to relent, and feel that he might have exercised undue severity."

"Is it, indeed, so?" asked Robert, his face lighting up.

"It is. I need scarcely say that your cousin observed, with apprehension, your father's returning mildness. Lest it might lead to a complete reconciliation, he resolved to get your father out of the country. He accordingly proposed a European tour, to which he procured your father's assent. Preparations were hurriedly made. They sailed for Liverpool, and several years were spent in visiting the principal cities of Europe."

Robert Ford, to whom this was new, listened intently.

"At length they returned. Then, in order that you might more effectually lose all trace of your father, he persuaded him to sell the estate upon which he had hitherto resided, and remove——"

"Whither?" demanded Mr. Ford, eagerly.

"I will tell you presently."

"I had written to my father. Were none of my letters received?"

"They were,—by Lewis. Of course, he took care to suppress them. Nevertheless, your father still felt a strong desire to see you once more, and tell you that he had forgiven you. Lewis again became alarmed, and, as a last resort, caused your death to be inserted in a western paper, and shown to your father. This was sufficient for that time. Within a brief period, however, his apprehensions and your father's desire to see you have again become excited. Your father one day caught a glimpse of you in the street."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Robert Ford, in agitation. "My father saw me? Where does he live?"

"In this city,—in New York. He recognized you in spite of the long separation, and so did Lewis; but the latter took the greatest care to assure your father that he was mistaken; that you had long been dead. Nevertheless, he was not wholly convinced. Though not in the least doubting your cousin's good faith, he answered that there might be some mistake; that it was possible you were still living."

"My dear father!"

"The uncertainty, and the anxious longing to see you, to which it has given rise, has, together with his age, made him severely ill. His life is even in danger."

"He is not dead!" exclaimed Robert, in an agitated tone.

"No, or I should have been informed. He directed your cousin to advertise for you in the public papers, such was his desire to hear from you, if still living."

"I have not looked into a paper for months."

"If you had, you would not have seen the advertisement. Your cousin has been much too careful for that. Though he appeared to acquiesce with your father's desire, and made him believe that he had complied with his request, he never did so."

"And is my father still sick?"

"He is, and his greatest desire is to see you before he dies."

Robert Ford rose hastily, and, going to the table, took his hat.

"What would you do, sir?"

"I must go and see my father. Did you not say he wished it?"

"Stay," said Mr. Sharp; "whatever is to be done must be done cautiously, or your cousin's suspicions will be aroused, and your purpose frustrated. I will arrange matters, if you will authorize me."

"Surely; but let not the delay be too long. Perhaps my father will die before I can see him."

"I will take care to expedite matters."

"I leave all in your hands; but tell me at least where you have obtained the information you have communicated."

"From your cousin himself."

"Did he confess it, then?" asked Mr. Ford, surprised.

"He consulted me professionally. But, sir," continued Mr. Sharp, in a tone of lofty consciousness, "as soon as I became aware of the iniquity in which he desired my assistance, I at once determined to do all that might be in my power to defeat his nefarious designs."

Nothing could exceed the moral dignity with which Mr. Sharp uttered these words.

"I will not tell you," he continued, with commendable self-denial, "how many thousands your cousin offered, if I would assist him. But for the hope of aiding in his discomfiture, I should have rejected his offers with indignation. Money is no temptation to me where right is concerned. But to the point. In the present case, I temporized. Your cousin even now thinks I am devoted to his interests, and it is best that he should not be undeceived."

"Do you know where my father lives?" inquired Robert, anxiously.

"It is in Fifth Avenue. After dinner I will give you the direction so that you cannot miss it. You must be cautious in your approach, and when the door is opened, proceed at once to your father's room. It is very probable that the servant will oppose your progress, but if you yield, Lewis will take good care that you never have another opportunity. May I request on the score of prudence, that you will not compromise me, or drop the slightest intimation that I have had any agency in sending you thither?"

"My dear friend," said Robert Ford, fervently, "you may rest assured that I will respect your wishes, of whose wisdom I entertain not a doubt."

He shook hands with Mr. Sharp, cordially. The lawyer, with an appearance of profound emotion, put his handkerchief to his eyes, and returned the pressure.

At this moment Helen entered, followed by a waiter from a restaurant, from which, on this day

of rejoicing, she had been extravagant enough to order a dinner.

The little table was quickly set out in the middle of the room, and spread with a white cloth, and upon it the savory food was placed. This was, indeed, an extraordinary occasion.

"Why, you are setting forth quite a banquet, my dear Miss Ford," said Mr. Sharp, rubbing his hands gently, for he was by no means insensible to the pleasures of the palate.

At this moment Martha Grey, the seamstress, unaware of the lawyer's visit, knocked at the door.

"Just in time, Martha," said Helen, gayly. "We want you to sit on this side the table."

"I couldn't think of it," said Martha, glancing at Mr. Sharp.

"I hope you will accept my daughter's invitation," said Mr. Ford, courteously. "Permit me, Mr. Sharp, to introduce our excellent neighbor, Miss Grey."

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, Miss Grey," said the lawyer, bowing profoundly. "Any friend of my esteemed friends, Mr. and Miss Ford, needs no other recommendation in my eyes. May I express the hope that you are well?"

"Quite so, thank you, sir," said Martha, a little overpowered by the lawyer's elaborate civility.

She was at length persuaded to make a fourth at Helen's banquet.

How much it was enjoyed by all present, not one of whom was accustomed to such good fare every day; how proudly and gracefully Helen did the honors of the occasion; how merrily they all laughed at the bungling attempts of Mr. Ford to

carve the fowls, and how, finally, he was compelled to call in the lawyer's assistance; how genial and affable Mr. Sharp was, and how he insisted on proposing the health of Martha Grey, much to that young lady's modest confusion; how his deference for her father raised him every moment in Helen's estimation,—all this I must leave to the imagination of the reader, while I prepare in the next chapter to invite him to a different scene.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BELL RINGS.

Two persons who are nearly concerned in the revelation made by Mr. Sharp to Robert Ford, now demand our attention.

First, Mr. Rand, who, upon a sick-bed, worn-out by anxiety and bodily weakness, is fast drifting towards that unseen world, where all that is dark and mysterious here will be disclosed, and we shall know even as we are known. The second, is Lewis Rand, his unworthy nephew, whose whole soul is absorbed by the eager desire to secure to himself his uncle's large fortune. Why this thirst for gold should so have possessed him, is not so clear. It was not that his habits were extravagant, for such was not the case. He was no voluptuary, at least not in the lowest sense of the word. It was not for the mere love of money that he craved it. He was elevated above the mere miser; but money was valuable to

him for the power which it conferred, and the consequence which it gave. Lewis Rand's ambition had taken this form. He desired to be known everywhere as the possessor of a princely fortune. He wished others to fawn upon him as he had fawned upon his uncle. As his dependence had compelled him to remain in a subordinate position, he wished others to become subordinates to him. Money he must have, somehow. So for years he had labored to establish and strengthen his position as his uncle's heir. The inheritance which he craved, would make him at once a millionaire.

As a general who has fortified a city, so as to make it, as he considers, impregnable, and at the last discovers a weak place which endangers the whole, exerts all his energy and all the resources which he can command to counteract the danger so Lewis had, as we have seen, set in motion certain agencies, through which he hoped to avert the peril which menaced him in his cousin's presence.

"Have you received no letters in answer to the advertisement, Lewis?" asked Mr. Rand, feebly.

"No, uncle, none whatever."

Mr. Rand sighed, and fell back upon his pillow.

The crimson bed-curtains were drawn apart, revealing the thin and wasted form of the old man. Thinner and more attenuated he grew day by day. Each day the result of the struggle for life became less doubtful. A strong desire for life might have given the needed stimulus to the vital functions, and turned the scale against death, but the sick man had ceased to desire it.

None saw this more clearly than Lewis. With

his cold, searching eye he had followed the slow advances of the destroyer. Not a word, however, had escaped him. How he trembled when the lamp of life burned for a time with a steadier radiance, lest, perchance, it might prove a harbinger of ultimate recovery; and when the momentary glow had departed, and the lamp burned so low that it seemed near its final extinction, he breathed more freely, and a glow of triumph lighted up his dark features,—features that might the next moment wear a look of the deepest sympathy. For Lewis had schooled them to obey the dictates of his will, and had not fear that they would betray him. He was a gamester who had staked his all upon a single venture, and was watching the chances with intense eagerness.

Morning after morning as he stole to his uncle's bedside, it was with a secret hope veiled under an appearance of the greatest solicitude, that he might find the struggle ended. Each day he hoped might prove the last,—that from his heart the burden of anxiety and the weariness of waiting might at once and forever be lifted.

Fortunate was it for the old man's peace, that he could not read this wicked wish in the eyes that were bent upon him. There was little fear. Could he conceive it possible that one whom he had long regarded with an affection second only to that which he bore his own son, who all his life long had never ceased to receive his bounty; could he dream that Lewis was capable of cherishing in his heart a hope so unnatural? So far from this, the faintest shadow of distrust had never entered his uncle's thoughts. In his face he

read nothing but sympathy and compassion. Mr. Lewis Rand, could you but sound the depth of wickedness in your own heart, could you drag it forth to the light and survey it in all its deformity, how would even your hardened nature shrink aghast and horror-stricken? Heaven only knows with what a web of sophistry you excuse this treachery of the heart. Could this be rent away, you could hardly stand as calmly as you do by the bedside of that old man, belying in your heart the filial words that fall so glibly from your tongue. Can you who have the power to bring happiness and peace to that bedside, and its unhappy occupant, who can bring the light of joy to those eyes soon to close forever, and repair a great injustice, still refuse to do it? There may come a time, whether near or remote, Heaven alone knows, when you would give all the wealth for which you are scheming if you had only done it.

On receiving a negative answer to his question, Mr. Rand remained for some time silent, with his face turned to the wall.

"It would be a great relief," he sighed, wearily, "if I could but see my son once before I die."

"When will he be done harping on his son?" muttered Lewis to himself. "He seems determined to torment me with it."

He said aloud, with a proper display of emotion, "Do not speak of dying, uncle. You will yet recover."

"Never, Lewis, never. There is something that tells me this sickness will be my last. My feet will soon enter the dark valley of the shadow of death. I have reached the age set by the Psalmist as the limit of human life. Even your kind solici-

tude cannot call me back from the grave that awaits me."

"I should be very sorry if it did," was the unspoken thought of Lewis, as he replied, covering his face with his handkerchief, as if to conceal his emotion, "you are—you must be deceived; you are looking brighter to-day."

"Lewis, your hopes deceive you. On the contrary, I never felt weaker than I do to-day. I have never felt more entirely satisfied of the hopelessness of my situation. Yet why do I say 'hopeless'? I do not fear death. Rather I welcome it as a friend. I feel no vain longing for a continuance of that life which is gliding from my grasp. For the last few years I have enjoyed too little happiness to make it seem very attractive. Wealth can do little. Even your kind attentions have failed. The consciousness of wrong done and unatoned for has followed me all these years. One wrong act has imbittered all my earthly existence."

"My dear uncle, I regret that you should dwell upon such painful thoughts. Even if you were in fault, which I do not believe, you are agitating yourself now to no purpose."

"Let me speak now, Lewis. The thought is always with me, and I am relieved by speaking. Never, Lewis, suffer yourself to be led hastily into a wrong act—never, as you value your soul's peace. The thought will come back to you in after years, and never leave you; you may surround yourself with all that wealth can give, even as I have done, and your heart will still be an aching void into which no thought of joy or happiness shall enter. When you are on your

death-bed, as I am now, you will feel how inestimable above all things else is that peace of mind which comes from a clear conscience and an unblemished life."

Standing thus at his uncle's bedside, with more than one sin unexpiated upon his soul, could Lewis listen unmoved to words which gained so deep a significance from this utterance by a dying man? Even he felt vaguely uncomfortable as he listened, mingled with an angry impatience which, however, he dared not betray.

"I feel a deep conviction," continued Mr. Rand, "that Robert is still living. I cannot tell whence it comes, but of nothing am I more thoroughly persuaded. I had hoped that the advertisement would prove effectual in finding him out. You are sure that you caused its insertion in papers of the largest circulation?"

"I have followed your directions, uncle," said Lewis, unblushingly, "notwithstanding my fear that it would lead to nothing."

"You did right, Lewis. After I am gone, I wish you to continue the advertisement. Your cousin will see it sooner or later. I am quite sure of that. And when after a time he comes back to you, I wish you to see that the provisions of my will are carried out. I will not claim your promise. I know that you will do so."

Lewis bowed, but forbore to speak.

"That is not all. You must tell him, Lewis, how I have sought for him, and how with a sorrowful heart I deplored my own injustice, from which he cannot have suffered more than I. You may tell him that I forgive him if he feels that there is anything to forgive, in the hope that he

will forgive me who need it so much more. You will tell him all this, Lewis?"

"Can you doubt it, uncle?" asked Lewis, evasively.

"No, Lewis, I have perfect confidence in you. You never have deceived me, and you will not begin now; and, Lewis, you must try to atone to Robert, in my stead, for the wrong he has suffered. Never let your affection for me persuade you that it was not a wrong. I would far rather have you think harshly of me, than unjustly of your cousin."

"I will endeavor to obey you even in that, hard though it be," said Lewis.

At that moment the quiet of the sick-chamber was broken in by a sharp peal of the door-bell. It was so unusual an occurrence in that solitary household, that it startled both.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

I CANNOT explain why it was, that the unexpected ringing of the bell led to the same thought in the minds of the sick man and his nephew. Sudden fear blanched the face of Lewis; a hopeful look stole over the old man's face.

"Go, Lewis," he said. "Perhaps it is Robert."

"Heaven forbid!" muttered Lewis, as he hastened from the room.

The sound of contending voices struck upon the ear of Lewis Rand, as he hurriedly descended

the staircase to the hall. The outer door had been opened, and the servant was endeavoring to impress upon the visitor, in obedience to directions he had received, that there was sickness in the house, and that he could not be admitted.

"Lead me to his chamber," said Robert Ford, pale with excitement, "I *must* see him. He is my father."

The servant looked in his agitated face, and moved aside that he might pass.

Lewis encountered him at the foot of the stairs. They looked at each other—those long-estranged cousins—a moment in silence. Lewis was as pale as death. His lips were compressed and bloodless. The shadow of failure darkened his way. Dismay and anger and strong disappointment struggled with him for the mastery. Robert was calmer. He would not have been human if the sight of his cousin had not awakened within him a feeling of resentment. But this was swallowed up by a feeling yet stronger—the desire to see his father.

"Where is my father, Lewis?" he demanded. "Tell me quickly."

He was about to pass, when his cousin stepped before him.

"Hold!" he exclaimed, in a quick, hoarse voice. "Would you endanger your father's life? He is in a most critical condition. The least excitement may kill him."

Robert hesitated for a moment. After a separation of eighteen years he stood within a few feet of his father, and was forbidden to enter his presence. Nothing short of the urgent reason

adduced by Lewis, would have stopped him for a moment.

"Is my father, then, so ill?" he asked, with emotion. "Why, oh why did you not send for me before?"

"Do you think I would not if I had known where to find you?" said Lewis, ignorant how far Robert had been apprised of his machinations.

"I cannot tell," said Robert, shaking his head. "There was a time, Lewis, when I could not have deemed you capable of it."

"And why should you now?"

"I cannot tell you at present; but I must see my father."

"I tell you again," said Lewis, vehemently, "that if you see him, it will be at the peril of his life. It hangs upon a thread."

Meanwhile Mr. Rand had listened with feverish anxiety to the voices which he could indistinctly hear. A wild hope had sprung up in his heart. Oh, for the power to rise from his bed and satisfy himself at once. Alas, this could not be! At length, as the speakers raised their voices, he thought he could distinguish the word "father." His agitation reached a fearful pitch. He raised his voice as high as his feeble strength would permit, and called "Robert!"

That word reached the ears of Robert Ford. Nothing could stop him now. He pushed Lewis aside, scarcely conscious what he did, and a moment after found him kneeling at his father's bedside.

"Father, forgive me!"

The old man, with an effort, stretched out his thin and wasted hand, and placed it tremulous

with weakness upon the head of his kneeling son.

"God, I thank thee," he uttered, reverently, "for this hour. This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. Robert, I have forgiven you long ago. Can you forgive me?"

"Do you then ask my forgiveness, O my father?"

"Yes, Robert. My heart has long since confessed the wrong it did you. Can you forgive me?"

"Freely, freely, my father."

"Now can I die content," said Mr. Rand, with a deep sigh of relief. "For many, many years I have waited and looked forward to this hour. I could not believe that God would suffer me to die till I had seen you."

"Die!" repeated Robert, in a sorrowful tone.

"Yes, Robert, you have come at the eleventh hour."

"And for months I have lived within two miles of you, and never guessed your nearness."

"Did you not see my advertisement?"

"Never."

"How is this?" said Mr. Rand, puzzled. "In what papers was it inserted, Lewis?"

Lewis stood at the door, an apprehensive listener. For obvious reasons he did not choose to obey this call.

"It may be because I seldom look at the papers," said Robert, not wishing to agitate his father with the intelligence of his cousin's treachery.

"But others must have seen it," persisted Mr. Rand. "Why did they not tell you?"

"I passed by a different name," explained Robert. "None that knew me—and these were but few—could guess my identity with Robert Rand."

At his father's request Robert gave a brief account of the eighteen years of separation. He sat with his father's hand resting in his. As he concluded, a convulsion passed over the old man's features. He clasped Robert's hand convulsively. The son leaned forward, hoping to catch the words that seemed struggling for utterance. He could only distinguish "my will—reparation."

These were the last words that passed the lips of the dying man.

He breathed his life out in the effort, and fell back—dead!

Robert had, indeed, come at the eleventh hour. Yet had he not come too late to make his father's death-bed happy. A peaceful smile rested upon the worn face. His life had closed happily.

Meanwhile what had become of Lewis?

It was difficult for him at first to collect his thoughts at this most unexpected occurrence.

At first he thought, "All is lost. My hopes are blasted!"

His second thought, when he had recovered from the momentary shock of his cousin's appearance, was, 'It may not be as bad as I fear. The old man cannot live long. This very excitement will probably prove too much for him in his present weak state. During the short time he has to live, it is not probable that anything will happen to disarrange my plans. In the first place, he thinks that his will provides for his son. *And so his true will does!* But I have taken care that

this shall not be brought forward. My uncle and cousin will probably spend the time in sentimentalizing. It will be well for me not to intrude upon this interview, or I may be asked some awkward questions. Lewis Rand, this is the turning-point of your fortunes. Be discreet for a short time, and all may yet be well."

There was one point that Lewis did not understand. How his cousin could have learned of his father's presence in the city. He did not suspect Mr. Sharp's fidelity, but thought it possible that he might, by some blunder, have revealed to Robert that of which he should have been kept ignorant. At all events the lawyer was the only one likely to yield him any satisfaction upon this point. Accordingly, willing to be out of the way for the present, he seized his hat, and hastened to the office of his confidential agent.

Mr. Sharp was, it must be confessed, awaiting with no little anxiety and curiosity, the result of Mr. Ford's visit, which might so materially affect his own interests.

There was a sharp knock at the door. He rose and opened it.

Lewis entered in great evident perturbation.

"Bless me, what's the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, in affected surprise.

"You may well ask me what's the matter."

"You don't mean to say——"

"I do mean to say that all my plans are menaced with defeat."

"But, how?"

"My cousin Robert is at this moment with his father."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the lawyer, in ad-

mirably counterfeited consternation. "How did this come about?"

"That is more than I can pretend to say. I came to you for the sake of obtaining information."

"Which I am wholly unable to afford."

Lewis threw himself upon a chair.

"To think," he exclaimed, bitterly, "that this should happen when I am just within reach of success. Twenty-four hours more, and it would probably have been too late!"

"How?"

"I mean that my uncle probably has not twenty-four hours' lease of life, unless this meeting revives him. The probability is, that it will have a contrary effect."

"Do you consider that you have lost all?"

"Fortunately, no. I am in hopes that this interview will, after all, prove of no advantage to my cousin."

"Ah!" said Mr. Sharp, rubbing his hands with apparent delight, but secret anxiety, beginning for the first time to feel that he would not be recompensed for his treachery.

"Yes. It is not likely that my uncle will be able to make a new will, and the present one I shall be very well contented with."

"Confusion!" thought the lawyer. "I wish I could only see the old gentleman, and whisper a few words in his ear."

If Lewis had not been too much absorbed in calculating his own chance, he might have noticed that Mr. Sharp's wanted affability had deserted him, and that he, too, seemed preoccupied.

CHAPTER XXX.

PALLIDA MORS.

After his interview with the lawyer, Lewis took his way home; his heart alternately cheered with hope, or disturbed by apprehension. On the whole, however, hope predominated. It was based on the knowledge that neither his uncle nor his cousin were men of business, and at this moment both would have too many other things to think of to recur to that which he dreaded.

As he opened the outer door, he met a servant in the hall.

"How is my uncle, now, Jane?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir; I haven't been up-stairs since you went away."

"Is my—is the gentleman that came in a little while ago still here?" he inquired anxiously.

"Yes, sir, I think so; I haven't seen him go out."

"Have you heard any talking? I am afraid my uncle will be too much excited by a visitor at this time."

"I heard a faint murmur like as if they were talking awhile ago, but I haven't heard anything for a few minutes. May I be so bold as to ask if the gentleman is a relation, sir?"

"Yes," said Lewis, shortly. "You say you have heard no sound proceeding from the room for a few minutes?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps he is dead," thought Lewis, hopefully. "At any rate, I will go up and see."

"That will do," he said to the servant, who was still in waiting. "I am going up into my uncle's room, and if I should want you I will ring."

"I wonder who the gentleman is," said the servant, to herself. "He said Mr. Rand was his father. I never heard that he had a son, for my part. If he is, I suppose he will inherit the property. I wonder how Mr. Lewis will like that. Well, I don't much care if he is disappointed, for I don't like him, and never did."

The dictatorial manner of Lewis had not gained him friends among the servants, and none of them could be expected to feel a very profound sorrow for any reverses which fate might have in store for him.

Lewis Rand softly ascended the stairs, and entered his uncle's bed-chamber.

It needed only a glance to assure him that his wish was granted. His heart leaped with exultation at the thought. This was the only thing which could give him a perfect sense of security. Now, by the substitution of the forged will, he felt that his interests were secured. The estate was his beyond the possibility of a transfer.

Now that his cousin was no longer to be feared as a rival, he felt that it would be both safe and politic, to treat him with a degree of consideration. This course would be likely to mislead suspicion, if any should be excited, when it was found, as it soon would be, that his cousin shared no portion of his father's princely estate.

"My uncle sleeps?" he said, inquiringly, as he entered the chamber.

"Yes," said Robert, solemnly, lifting up a wan face from the bed-clothes in which it was buried; "the sleep that knows no waking."

Apparently much shocked at this intelligence, Lewis started back with an ejaculation of sorrow.

"I ought not to feel surprised," he said, in a low voice; "it is an event which I have been expecting and fearing for many weeks. Yet its actual coming finds me unprepared."

With his mournful gaze intently fixed upon the old man's face, Robert paid little heed to his cousin's words. Thoughts of the long weary years that had intervened since he parted from his father, then in the strength and pride of that manhood, upon which he himself was just entering, and the changes that had since come over each, till the present sad moment brought them together, crowded upon him with a force which he could not resist, and he sat there, looking straight before him, vainly endeavoring to reconcile the past with the present, till he was tempted to think the past eighteen years but a dream, from which he would ere long awake.

It did not take him long to recover from that delusion.

As he lifted his eyes he met his own reflection in the mirror opposite. That was no young man's face that met his gaze. The freshness of youth, had given place to the grave careworn look of later years. The once dark hair was threaded here and there with silver. The smooth brow was sown with premature wrinkles. The cheek had lost its bloom, and was now thin and sallow. In all this there was no deception. But even if this had not been sufficient, he had but to look towards

the bed, to realize how time had passed. That thin, shrunken old man who lay there—was that his father? No, there was no mistaking all this; these years of estrangement were no vain imaginings; they were all too sad realities.

And there, but a few steps from him, sat, with a look of hypocritical sorrow, the man who had lent his best efforts to widen the breach, of which he had been the cause, and throw up a permanent wall of separation between the father and the son. He had changed least of the three. There was the same plausible smile, the same crafty look about the eyes that seldom met your gaze. There were no wrinkles to be seen on his brow. Neither had his heart changed. It was as full of subtlety and evil thoughts and plans as ever.

Lewis Rand had changed least of the three, yet, of them all, he was farthest removed from the freshness and simplicity of childhood, that had never been his. He was one of those who seem never to have been young.

"Cousin Robert," said Lewis, with an air of grave courtesy, "although our grief is so fresh that all other thoughts seem intrusive, yet there are certain things that must be thought of. It is right and proper that you should participate with me in paying the last offices of respect and affection to our lamented relative. You were nearer to him than I. It is fitting that, from you, should proceed the orders relative to the funeral."

"It is a right which I have no disposition to exercise. I would much rather leave it entirely

in your hands. My mind is not in a fit state to enter upon such arrangements."

"You have stated my own case," said Lewis, in a voice of well-counterfeited emotion. "The death of my dear uncle, for whom I cherished so deep an affection, and to whom I am indebted for so many acts of kindness, weighs most heavily upon my heart. Nothing but an imperative sense of duty would enable me to bear up under it. But I will, if you desire it, so far overcome my grief, as to give the necessary directions."

"I shall be glad to have you do so," said Robert, briefly.

There had been a time when he would not have questioned his cousin's sincerity, but gratefully accepted his proffered sympathy,—when his own heart would have been soothed by this companionship in grief. But the revelation of his cousin's perfidy had been too recent,—the memory of his wrongs was too fresh. He might, in time, forgive, but he could not at once forget. He did not look towards his cousin, but his eyes were fixed continually upon the father from whom he had been separated for eighteen years,—from whom the grave must soon separate him, till he too lay as still and motionless as his father now lay, outstretched before him.

Lewis was about to leave the room, when he paused, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"Pardon me," he said, hesitatingly, "but this unhappy separation has left us so much in ignorance of each other, that I am not informed whether you have children."

"I have one daughter."

"And your wife?"

"Is no longer living."

"Will you leave me your direction, that I may send a carriage?"

"It will not be necessary. We will take a carriage from here."

"As you please. One thing more. Pardon me if I am wrong, for I know nothing of your circumstances; you may require a sum of money to procure proper mourning."

"It is needless," said Robert, briefly. "We are sufficiently provided."

"Proud as ever!" muttered Lewis, to himself. "We'll see how long that continues. If I am not greatly mistaken, he will be glad enough to avail himself of my offers before long."

Meanwhile, Helen had reached home and was wondering what had detained her father so long. He had gone out with Mr. Sharp, not mentioning where he was going.

She began to be afraid that, in one of his not unusual fits of abstraction, he had met with some accident, perhaps been run over by some passing vehicle, while crossing the street.

"Where can he be?" she was asking, anxiously, for the tenth time at least, when, to her great joy, she at length heard his familiar step upon the stairs.

She hastened to the door, exclaiming, "Why, papa, why have you been gone so long?"

She looked into his face, and suddenly stopped short. She saw, by his expression, that something had happened.

"What is the matter, papa?" she asked, apprehensively.

"We have met with a great misfortune, Helen," said Mr. Ford, gravely.

"A great misfortune! Has your invention then failed?"

"It is not that, Helen. Did you ever hear me speak of your grandfather?"

"No."

"I will tell you the reason now. There had been a long and unhappy alienation between us,—longer, I have since found, than there need to have been, if we could only have met and had a mutual understanding. I married against my father's wishes. If he had once seen your mother, Helen, he would, I am sure, have withdrawn all his opposition. As it was, we separated eighteen years ago, and to-day we met for the last time."

"But the misfortune, papa?"

"We met at his death-bed, Helen; but, thank Heaven, not too late for a full reconciliation. An hour since, your grandfather died, with his hand clasped in mine. The funeral takes place day after to-morrow. We must procure fitting dresses. I do not understand such things, but you can consult with Martha."

Helen wished to learn more of her grandfather, of whom she now, for the first time, heard; but she saw and respected her father's grief, and forbore to question him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

READING THE WILL.

Although the funeral of Mr. Rand was not largely attended,—for his seclusion had prevented his making many acquaintances in the city,—no expense was spared upon it. Lewis was determined that, so far as money went, every respect should be paid to his uncle's memory. Perhaps he thought in this way to atone for the grievous wrong which he had done him. To his cousin and Helen he was sedulously polite and even deferential, so that those who could look no deeper than the surface might well suppose him to be all that a kind and affectionate relation ought to be.

On the day succeeding the funeral the will was appointed to be read.

"Of course you will be present, Robert," said Lewis, "you and your daughter. I need hardly say that I am entirely ignorant of the manner in which my uncle had seen fit to dispose of his property. I have reason, indeed, to think that he has made some small provision for me. But whatever may be the purport of the will which is to be read to-morrow, I pledge myself in advance to interpose no obstacle to its provisions."

Perhaps he expected a similar declaration from Robert, but his cousin kept silence.

The next morning at ten o'clock the will was read. A small company was gathered in the library of the deceased. Lewis leaned his arm

upon the table by which he sat, with a downcast look but a throbbing heart. One brief form more, and the object of his life would be attained.

The document was not a long one. After the usual introduction, the testator bequeathed all his property, real and personal, without reserve, to his dear nephew, Lewis Rand, for whom he cherished a strong affection.

There was a slight flush upon the face of Robert Ford, or Robert Rand, as we should now call him. It was not strange that he should display some emotion at being thus publicly ignored, and his birthright transferred to another. As he looked up, he thought he could detect a momentary gleam of exultation in the face of Lewis. But it was immediately repressed.

The lawyer, who had previously been made acquainted with the fact that Robert was a son of the deceased, looked surprised.

"Was this expected?" he asked. "How shall we account for no mention being made of your name," addressing Robert, "as his son, and direct heir? such an omission is extraordinary."

"My father," said Robert, calmly, "was not aware of my existence. He had not seen me for many years, and had been led to believe me dead. It was only accidentally"—his glance rested for a moment on his cousin, who strove to look unconcerned—"that I was enabled to discover his residence in this city, and make myself known to him before he died."

He was proud enough to wish to keep concealed the long estrangement between them, desiring to shield his father's memory from any reproach

which this omission might be thought to cast upon it.

"My cousin is quite right," said Lewis. "His father and myself believed, on what we supposed to be reliable evidence, that he died some years since in Chicago. It is a source of regret to me that our mistake was discovered at so late a period, when in consequence of the near approach of death, it was impossible for my uncle to make any change in the disposition of his estate."

The lawyer who, without having any definite grounds of suspicion, distrusted Lewis and his smooth professions, answered, coldly, "Your regret will no doubt be considerably lessened when you reflect that the property which you acknowledge has come to you by mistake, is at your absolute disposal, and that it is therefore in your power to remedy this unintended wrong."

The sallow face of Lewis flushed beneath the penetrating gaze of the lawyer, who, he saw, suspected the real nature which he kept concealed beneath a flimsy veil of deception and hypocrisy.

But he was prepared even for this emergency.

"That is true," he said, "and although my reverence for the expressed wishes of the deceased will not permit me to interfere materially with the disposition which he has made, I shall take care that my cousin is provided for. Robert, if you will do me the favor to remain after this form is over, I shall be glad to explain what I propose to do."

Lewis had been thinking of this contingency. He saw that it would be absolutely necessary to make some provision for his cousin, as well to

quiet the world's censure as more effectually to ward off suspicion from himself.

In the western part of Pennsylvania there was a small farm, worth, with the buildings upon it, three or four thousand dollars. This was but an insignificant item in the list of Mr. Rand's possessions. It was this farm that Lewis proposed bestowing upon his cousin. It would, he thought, be a cheap way of securing his acquiescence in the provisions of the will, and remove him to an obscure neighborhood, where he would have little power of doing him harm.

When all, save Helen and her father, had departed, Lewis turned to his cousin, and after repeating, at some length, his expressions of regret that his uncle had not been spared to make a change in the disposition of his property, concluded by tendering him, as a free gift, the farm in question, together with two hundred dollars in money, which he judged would be sufficient to convey them hither, and pay any little debts which they might have incurred.

Robert listened in surprise to this disgraceful proposition. He was not a practical man, and in business matters he was very liable to be deceived. But he knew sufficient of the extent of his father's wealth to divine, that the pittance which his cousin offered was less than the hundredth part of the entire estate.

Knowing this, his pride rose in indignant rebellion at this insult.

"Do you think, Lewis," he said, scornfully, "that if my father had lived long enough to change his will according to the desire which you have several times seen fit to express, that *this* is

the provision which he would have made for me?"

"If you do not consider it sufficient," said Lewis, evasively, "I will say a thousand dollars, in addition to the farm. That will enable you to stock it amply, and live quite independently."

"You are generous," said Robert, with sarcasm, for his spirit was now fully roused; "but think not that I will become a pensioner upon your bounty. One tenth part even of the pittance which you offer me, if it came from my father, I would gratefully accept. But for you, who bestow your alms upon me as if I were a beggar, instead of the son of the man from whom all your wealth is wrongfully derived, I scorn your gift, and reject it."

"You are hasty, and may regret your decision. Think of your daughter,—would you leave her penniless?"

"Let her decide that question. Helen, shall we accept what this man offers, or shall we preserve our humble independence, as we have done heretofore?"

"So long as I have you, papa, it is enough. God will take care of us."

"You hear her answer, Lewis Rand. I have but one thing to say to you before we part,—it may be for the last time upon earth. I am not ignorant of the arts by which you have brought about and kept up the estrangement between my father and myself; how many overtures towards reconciliation on either side have been defeated through your machinations; how carefully you have kept alive in my father's heart the belief that I was dead, though you knew it to be false. By

such means you have compassed your object. I do not envy you your reward. Far less will I be indebted to you for a miserable pittance of that wealth which you have wrested from me by a systematic course of treachery and deceit. Come, Helen, let us go."

Lewis Rand turned red and white by turns during this unexpected address, which satisfied him that Mr. Sharp had proved faithless to his trust. But flushed as he was with success, he could afford to disregard it all now.

"Do as you please," he said, coldly. "At any rate, you cannot deny that I have made the offer. You may, some day, regret not having accepted it."

"Never!" said his cousin, vehemently.

"Very well; that is your affair. In reference to the grave charges which you have seen fit to bring against my character, I have only to say, that I defy you to prove them. Farewell! I would have been your friend. Since you would have me for your enemy, so let it be."

"I care as little for the one as for the other," said Robert, proudly.

So saying, he held out his hand to Helen, and together they left the stately dwelling, with its costly furniture and appointments, and took their way slowly to their humble lodging, with its bare floor and hard wooden chairs, contrasting, in its plainness, so vividly with the dwelling they had left. There was another difference. The one was dark and gloomy in spite of its luxury. Here the warm and cheerful sunshine entered in at the open window, and flung its radiance all over the room.

Helen breathed a sigh of relief as she entered.

"Oh, how much pleasanter it is here," she said, "than in that great gloomy house!"

And she began preparing supper with unwonted lightness of heart, as if a sudden weight had been removed from her spirit.

"I am well rid of him," muttered Lewis, as his cousin left the room. "He really has more spirit than I suspected. As for that Sharp, he has served me a scurvy trick, but he has overshot his mark this time. I can fancy his disappointment when he discovers that Robert is still a beggar."

Lewis laughed sardonically, and gave himself up to the intoxicating dream of power which his wealth would give him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MARGARET'S SECOND FLIGHT.

MARGARET lay sick for many weeks in her mother's cottage, where, it will be remembered, she took refuge when, maddened by the discovery of Jacob's falsehood, she fled from him, heedless of the fury of the elements. Physical exhaustion and mental excitement brought on a raging fever, attended by almost constant delirium. Her mother watched by her bedside with an affection that never tired. For a time it was doubtful what would be the issue. Margaret's life trembled in the balance, and it required but little to incline it either way. Fortunately for Margaret, however, her constitution was naturally a strong one,

and its native vigor triumphed at length over the assaults of disease, fierce though they had been. The fever spent its force, and she became rapidly better, though at first scarcely stronger than an infant.

The first indication of her amendment was her recognition of her mother.

The old lady was sitting in a rocking-chair beside the bed, when Margaret lifted her head from the pillow, and said, in a tone of curiosity,—

"Who are you?"

"Who am I?" inquired her mother. "Don't you know me, Margaret?"

"You look some like my mother. Are you?"

"Yes, Margaret, I am your own mother, who loves you."

"I believe you are. How long have I been sick, mother?"

"It is—let me see," said the old lady, reflectively. "It must be six weeks. Yes, it will be six to-morrow."

"And for six weeks I have been confined to this room and this bed?"

"Yes, my child."

"Do not call me child, mother. All the beauty and bloom of childhood, all its happy hopes and trustful spirit, have gone forever. There are some who are children all their lives. But I—it seems a great while since I was a child."

The simple old lady did not comprehend her daughter's meaning. She understood her words literally.

"Why, you are young yet, Margaret."

"Young! don't call me young, mother. I am older than you."

"Older than I?" said the old lady, who fancied Margaret's brain a little disordered, and sought to restore it by reasoning; "but you know a child cannot be older than its mother. You are but thirty-seven, while I am seventy."

"I don't mean older in years, mother. Older in suffering, older in the experience of life. It isn't years that make us old, mother, but our own passions."

This was uttered half in soliloquy.

"I am afraid you will hurt yourself by talking, Margaret. You had better go to sleep, or would you like some gruel?"

"No, mother."

There was silence for a few minutes. During this time Margaret was scanning the little room and its furniture. Nothing could be plainer, and yet more comfortable. There was a rag carpet on the floor, and a few plain articles of furniture scattered about the room; there was a small clock on the mantel, whose drowsy ticking could be distinctly heard, so free was the neighborhood from noises of every description. It was such a retreat as the old would like for its quiet, while they would not be troubled by its monotony and lack of excitement. But Margaret was too impetuous and excitable to feel it otherwise than oppressive.

"How long have you lived here, mother?" she asked abruptly, after a silence of some minutes.

"Seven years, Margaret; seven years come fall."

"Seven years! seven years, mother! I should think you would have died of solitude long ago. You haven't any neighbors, have you?"

"None very near. None that I go to see. I do not care to visit. Tabby, here, is company for me. Ain't you, Tabby?"

The large cat, that was lying at the other end of the room, rose at this appeal, and after stretching herself in a way to show her extraordinary size, walked slowly across the room, and submitted herself, with an appearance of pleasure, to the old lady's caresses.

"See, Margaret; she answers for herself," as the cat, in recognition of the attention shown her, purred loudly.

"I don't know but you are right in choosing such a friend," said Margaret, after a thoughtful pause. "She will treat you well as long as you do not abuse her. That cannot be said of all human friends. Yet I should not be able to live six months as you do, mother. My temperament needs excitement."

"I fear it has not always brought you good, Margaret," said the old lady, who could ill comprehend the turbulent spirit which her daughter inherited from a father of mixed French and Irish blood.

One afternoon a week later, Margaret, after turning restlessly for some minutes, asked her mother if she had not a newspaper in the house.

"I get tired looking at the cat," she exclaimed; "I want something else to think of."

"I don't know," said the old lady, hesitatingly. "I don't take a paper; but perhaps I can find one that came round a bundle, if that will do."

"Yes, mother, anything. It don't matter what."

After diligent search, the old lady managed to

discover part of a last week's daily paper that had come round a package which she recently bought. Apologizing for the unsatisfactory result of her search, she placed it in Margaret's hand.

In general, there is nothing very interesting in an old daily paper; but Margaret, who had been shut out from the world for nearly two months, and knew nothing of what had transpired during that time, seized the fragment with avidity, and read it entire, even to the advertisements. Finally her glance wandered to the deaths; she started as she met the name of Rand.

DIED. At his residence in Fifth Avenue, GERALD RAND, Esq., 71.

"He's dead, then, at last," she murmured, "and Jacob Wynne has got the thousand dollars which were promised him. Let him enjoy it while he may. It will not be long, unless,—but I must see him before I take any decisive step. He may have said what he did only to provoke me. Would to heaven it were so! Yes, I must see him; I must give him one more chance, and then, if he still scorns me," this she said with fierce emphasis, "let him look to himself."

"What have you read that excites you so much, Margaret?" questioned her mother, anxiously.

"Nothing particular."

"You frightened me when you spoke so fiercely."

"Did I?" said Margaret. "I was only talking to myself. It's a way I have. But, mother," she continued, changing her tone suddenly, "do you

think I shall be well enough to go out to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" repeated the old lady, lifting up both hands in extreme astonishment; "why, you must be raving crazy to think of such a thing! What in the world do you want to go out for?"

"Never mind now," said her daughter, evasively. "I thought I should like to go out. But I suppose I am weaker than I think for."

"Why, the fever has only just left you. It would be death to think of leaving the house."

"We won't say anything more about it, mother. Only I get tired of staying in the same place so long. The time moves so slowly. What time is it?"

"Three o'clock."

"It has been three for the last hour," said Margaret, with a touch of impatience in her tone.

"I declare the clock has stopped," said the old lady, adjusting her spectacles; "I must have forgotten to wind it up. I declare it's most time to get tea."

She filled the tea-kettle, and set it over the fire, Margaret looking on with languid attention.

Her mother thought that Margaret had given up the idea of leaving the house. It was only an invalid's fancy, she thought. But Margaret had a purpose in view, and only deferred carrying it out till her weakness had somewhat abated. On the third day, though still far from strong, she determined to leave the house. Knowing that her mother would never consent, she devised a stratagem to get her out of the way.

"Is there an orange in the house?" she asked, immediately after breakfast.

"No, Margaret."

"I am sorry; I think I could relish one."

"I can get one at the store."

"But that is a good ways off. Isn't it, mother?"

"Only quarter of a mile."

"It is too far for you to go."

"Too far? I go there several times a week, Margaret."

"Then if it will not be too much trouble, I should really like to have you go."

"I will go immediately. Isn't there anything else you would like?"

"Nothing, mother."

"God forgive me for deceiving her!" thought Margaret. "But I cannot do otherwise, He knows that."

Scarcely was her mother out of the house than Margaret hastily rose from the bed, and with trembling fingers arrayed herself in the garments which had been so long laid aside. They had been carefully washed and mended by her mother, so that they looked comparatively respectable. She threw them on very hastily, fearing that her mother would return and detect her. She saw half a dollar on the mantel. This also she took, knowing that she should need money, and left the house.

When her mother returned with the orange she found, to her dismay, that her daughter had disappeared. On the table there was a scrap of paper, with these words traced hurriedly upon it:—

"Forgive the artifice I have employed, dear mother. I knew you would not let me go, and I must. There is something of great importance that I must attend to without delay. When that is over, I may come back to you.

"MARGARET.

"P. S. I took a half dollar from the mantel, as I may need it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

SURPRISED and terrified at her daughter's disappearance, the old lady went to the door and, shading her eyes, looked anxiously up the road, but with her failing eyesight she was unable to catch sight of the fugitive.

"The child must be crazy," she said to herself. "She'll catch her death of cold, going out so soon after the fever. I must go after her and bring her back."

Putting on her hood once more, the old lady went out, and took the road towards the city. But she did not find her daughter. Returning with a heavy heart and a sense of deep perplexity she sat down to her knitting, first carefully putting away the orange, which she thought Margaret might like to eat if, as she hoped, she should discover her weakness and return home at night.

But Margaret did not come that night, nor yet again the next.

When she left her mother's house she hurried forward at a greater speed than her strength admitted, so great was her anxiety to elude pursuit. She had not gone half a mile when she found her strength failing her. Quite exhausted, she staggered to a flat stone by the side of the road, and sat down.

"Mother was right," she said to herself; "I am not strong enough for this journey; but I must get on somehow now that I have started."

As this moment her eye rested on the half dollar which she had taken, and which she still held in her hand.

"Perhaps this will procure me a ride," she thought. "What matter if I am penniless afterwards. I only care to live long enough to be revenged."

She looked back on the road she had travelled, hoping to see some wagon which might serve her purpose.

A little distance off was a covered market wagon, advancing at a good round pace. The driver was a stout, pleasant-looking man, and Margaret, hurriedly scanning his features, judged that she might venture to accost him.

She accordingly rose from the stone on which she had been sitting, and made a gesture for him to stop.

Somewhat surprised, he called out: "Hold up, Dick! Now, ma'am, what can I do for you?"

"Would you be willing to take a passenger to New York?"

"Yes, ma'am, just as lieves as not."

"I am quite willing to pay you. Will that be

enough?" asked Margaret, offering the half dollar.

"Yes, ma'am; enough, and fifty cents too much. Your company will be pay enough. But, hold on a minute; I'll jump out and help you in."

"Thank you; I have been sick, and am not so strong as usual, otherwise I would not trouble you."

"No trouble at all. You look as if you'd been sick,—kinder peaked, just as my Sarah Jane looked after she'd had the fever. Ain't it rather imprudent for you to be out?"

"Perhaps it is; but I have something to do which cannot be delayed."

The driver seemed disposed to be social and communicative.

"I'd orter be pretty well used to this road; I've come on it twice a week for the last fifteen years."

"Have you?" said Margaret, listlessly.

"Yes, marketing. That's my business. I've got a regular run of customers, you see, and they've got used to me, and know I'll never bring anything but what's good. There's Judge Harcouth now; may be you to know the judge?"

"No."

"His wife won't never buy no sausages except what I bring. Well, mine are pretty good, if I do say it. I get old Marm Brown to make 'em, and she'd orter know how, for she's been in the business for forty years. Do you like sausages?"

"I don't know," said Margaret, who had not heard a word that was said.

"Don't know," repeated the driver, staring at her in surprise.

"Excuse me; I didn't hear what you said."

"I asked if you liked sausages. Some folks have a prejudice agin 'em."

"Yes, pretty well."

"I like to have company," continued the driver; "like to have somebody to talk to. Talkin's natural to the family. My mother had a pretty long tongue, and used to use it most all the time, so that none of the rest of us could get in a word edgeways."

Apparently, the mother's gift had descended to the son, for he kept up a constant stream of talk, which was fortunate for Margaret, for he expected little in the way of response, and so was less likely to notice her abstraction.

"Last week I brought my oldest boy, Hamlet, with me. Queer name, isn't?"

"No."

"Why, 'tain't very common," said the driver, a little surprised at this negative.

"That is what I mean," said Margaret, hurriedly.

"I s'pose you wonder what made me give him such a name, but the fact is my own name is pretty common. You may have heard of John Smith?"

"I think I have heard the name," said Margaret, absently.

Her grave manner was thought to conceal something jocose by Mr. Smith, who laughed heartily, ejaculating "Good, by jingo!" somewhat to Margaret's surprise.

"That's why," he resumed, "I thought I'd give my children at least one name that wasn't common, so I concluded to ask the schoolmaster for

some. He told me I'd find what I wanted in Shakespeare, so I bought a copy second-hand, and the very fust name I come across was Hamlet. So I gave that name to my oldest boy. My second boy's name is Othello—the boys call him Old Fellow; pretty good joke, isn't it? I didn't know till afterwards that it was the name of a nigger, or I shouldn't have taken it. However, it sounds pretty well; think so?"

"Yes."

"Then I've got two girls, I call them Desdemony and Parsley, and the baby we haven't decided about, but I reckon we shall call him Falstaff. Falstaff was a good-natured old fellow as fur as I've read about him. But I don't know as you're interested about these matters."

"Oh, yes," said Margaret, looking straight before her in the direction of the city, whose spires were now discernible.

"Got any children of your own, ma'am?"

"No."

"I calculate you're married?"

"Yes—no," said Margaret, agitated, for the question opened her wound afresh.

"Queer customer, I calc'late," thought Mr. Smith. "Don't seem to know whether she's married or not. May be she's been divorced."

"Excuse me," said Margaret, feeling it necessary to say something. "I believe I am not strong enough to talk much."

"Oh well, I'll do all the talkin'," said the driver, good-naturedly. "You don't look very rugged, that's a fact. Ever tried Dr. Bang's Bitters?"

"No."

"Well, my wife thinks a sight of 'em; says they go right to the weak spot. Better buy some when you get a good chance."

So Mr. Smith ran on, satisfied with an occasional response from Margaret, till they reached the paved streets where the noise was too great to admit of being easily heard.

"Where do you want to get out?" shouted Mr. Smith. "I'll pull up whenever you say so."

When they reached the central part of the city, Margaret gave the signal, and Mr. Smith assisted her out.

"You had better let me pay you," she said.

"No, no, you're perfectly welcome. I like company. It sort of shortens the way. Just hail me again whenever you're going my way, and I'll give you a lift and welcome."

"Thank you; you are very kind."

Margaret mechanically took the first street that led into Broadway. She felt more at home in a crowd, and scarcely knowing where she was going, walked slowly along the sidewalk, jostled on this side and on that, but apparently without heeding it.

At length her attention was attracted.

On the opposite side of the street a couple were walking slowly, chatting in a lively way as they walked. The lady was gayly dressed, and was evidently pleased with the attentions of her companion. He is an old acquaintance, Jacob Wynne, the scrivener, but no more resembling his former self than a butterfly the chrysalis from which it emerged. Lewis Rand had paid him the thousand dollars agreed upon, and he had patronized the tailor extensively in consequence. He

was now fashionably attired, and had the air of one on whom fortune smiles.

It was only by chance that Margaret's attention was drawn to him.

When she recognized him, all at once her heart sank within her. In her enfeebled state the shock was too great. She sank upon a step half fainting.

It was the step of a fashionable store, and she was directly in the way of those entering.

"Come, be off," said a clerk, rudely; "we can't have any vagabonds here."

Margaret's look of weakness and helpless misery, as she tried to rise, attracted the attention of a young girl who was passing. It was Helen Ford, just returning from rehearsal at the theatre.

"Are you sick?" she asked, in a tone of sympathy.

"I am afraid I am," said Margaret, faintly.

"Where is your home? Let me lead you to it."

"My home!" repeated Margaret. "I have none."

"No home!" said Helen, in a tone of compassion. "Then where do you expect to sleep to-night?"

"Heaven only knows."

"If you will come with me, I will take care of you to-night," said Helen. "You are too sick to be out."

"Will you, indeed, be so kind?" said Margaret, gratefully.

"I shall be glad to help you. Now lean on my arm. Don't be afraid; I am strong."

Margaret rose, and with tottering step accom-

panied Helen to the boarding-house. She led her up-stairs to Martha Grey's apartment.

Quickly communicating to Martha where and under what circumstances she had found her, she asked the seamstress if she would be willing to allow her to remain with her. Martha readily entered into Helen's charitable views, and together they strove to make their unexpected visitor comfortable.

Helen little suspected that the woman whom in her compassion she had succored, had it in her power to restore to her father the estate of which he had been defrauded. Sometimes even in this world the good Samaritan receives his reward.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JACOB SEALS HIS FATE.

"How do you feel this morning?" asked Helen, as she entered Martha's room.

Her question was addressed to Margaret, who, wan and pale, was seated at a table eating some toast, which the compassionate seamstress in her kindness had prepared for her.

"I am much better," said Margaret, though her appearance did not bear out the assertion.

"It will take some time yet for you to recover fully; you need rest and freedom from care."

"Freedom from care!" repeated Margaret, smiling bitterly. "Yes, that is what I need, but where shall I find it?"

"With us," answered Martha, gently.

"What!" exclaimed Margaret, fixing her eyes

upon the seamstress in surprise, "would you be burdened with me?"

"We shall not consider it a burden," said Helen, "and I am sure we ought to welcome an opportunity to be of service to any one of our fellow-creatures."

"Yet," said Margaret, suffering her eyes to wander about the room, with its plain and scanty furniture, "you cannot be rich—even one person must——"

"No, we are far from rich," said Helen, divining what she would have said, "but neither are we very poor. I am paid quite a large salary for singing, and—and you must not think of the expense."

"But I am a stranger to you," said Margaret; "why are you so kind to me?"

"Because you are in trouble."

"Perhaps I may make an ungrateful return. Suppose I should take the opportunity to rob you?"

Helen laughed merrily.

"We are not afraid," she said; "besides, I think you would be puzzled to find anything worth taking."

Margaret smiled faintly.

"I see you are not suspicious; I envy you that. There was a time when I was as trustful, and as firm a believer in human goodness as you are. But that time has passed, never to return."

"I am afraid," said Martha, "that your experience has not been an agreeable one."

"I have seen trouble," said Margaret, briefly. "There may be better times in store; I shall know soon."

"Let us hope there will be," said Martha, cheerfully.

"Amen!" said Margaret.

"I must go to rehearsal now," said Helen. "When I return, I will call in."

"What is her name?" questioned Margaret, abruptly, as the door closed upon Helen.

"Helen."

"I mean the last name."

"Her father goes by the name of Ford, but Helen has told me within a day or two that his real name is Rand."

"Rand!" repeated Margaret, starting in surprise.

"Yes."

She remembered that this was the name which had been so many times repeated on the paper which her husband had employed in trying his pen.

"Do you know anything of the name!" asked Martha, observing that her companion seemed struck by it."

"I have heard of a man by the name—a rich man."

"Probably Helen's grandfather."

"How comes it, then, that she is living here?"

"Some family estrangement. Her grandfather supposed until nearly the last moment of his life that his son was dead. It was too late to alter his will, and so Helen and her father are left penniless."

"And who inherited the property then?" demanded Margaret, eagerly.

"A cousin of Mr. Ford's—I mean of Mr. Rand's."

"And I know by what means he acquired it," thought Margaret. "It may be that—but I must see Jacob first."

"From this moment Margaret became restless. She felt that she could not be at peace till the issue was decided. She determined once more to appeal to Jacob, and ascertain beyond a doubt whether the statement which he had made respecting their marriage was really true, or only fabricated to vex her. This question must first be decided, and then—why then she would be guided by circumstances."

"She rose from her seat, and threw her shawl over her shoulders."

"Where are you going?" asked Martha, pausing in her work.

"I must go. I have something to do which cannot be delayed."

"But are you able to go out?" questioned the seamstress.

"Perhaps not; but it would do me more harm to remain here, feeling that I ought to be elsewhere, that things might go wrong without me, than the exposure and exertion of going out."

"You will come back here when you have accomplished what you desire?"

"I think so—I cannot tell—I will not promise," returned Margaret, with an air of indecision; "but at any rate, whether I come or not, I thank you heartily for all your kindness to me, and for all that you have offered to do for me. I am not so used to kindness that I can afford to think little of it."

"I am afraid it will be too much for her," thought Martha, as Margaret left the room with

an unsteady step. "There is plainly some mysterious sorrow which is preying upon her mind. If I could find out what it is, I would try to comfort her."

Margaret, on reaching the street got into an omnibus which set her down at the corner of the street on which Jacob Wynne lived.

We will precede her.

The scrivener is seated at as mall table. Before him are several small piles of gold which he is counting out from a larger one before him. It is the money which Lewis Rand paid him for his complicity in the iniquitous scheme, the success of which has robbed Helen and her father of a princely inheritance.

Jacob's eyes sparkled as they rested on the glittering coins before him, and in his heart, as in that of his employer on the day of his uncle's death, there springs up the exulting thought: "And all this is mine."

But while he is thus engaged, there is a footfall on the stairs, the step of one ascending slowly and with effort, but Jacob is too much absorbed in his pleasing employment to heed or hear it.

A moment afterwards, and through the half-open door a woman's face is seen peering. Margaret's face is thin and pale, the result of her recent exhausting illness, and there is a look of weariness besides, induced by the too great exertion of walking in her weakened state; but her eyes are painfully bright, and her expression pale, thin, and weary as she is, is one of stern determination.

"Seven hundred!" said Jacob, as he completed

the seventh pile, and commenced another, unconscious of the eyes that were fixed upon him.

Margaret paused a moment on the threshold. She saw before her a man who, low and mean and ignoble as he was, had won her heart in the days of her youthful freshness, and now in spite of the resentment which she felt at his unworthy treatment, she could not look upon him without a pang,—without a longing to become to him once more what she had been.

"Jacob!" she uttered in an uncertain voice.

Jacob Wynne turned round with a guilty start as though he had been detected in some knavery, and half unconsciously drew his sleeve over the pile of gold, as if to screen it from observation. When he saw who it was that had so startled him, a frown gathered upon his face, and he said, impatiently,—

"You here, Margaret?"

"You seem glad to see me after my long absence!" she said. "By your leave I will take a seat, as I am somewhat tired."

He looked uneasily at her, not feeling altogether certain of her purpose in calling, and muttered, half to himself, "I wish you had waited till next week."

"Why should you wish that?" she asked, catching his words.

"Because I shall then be gone," he said, coldly

"Gone! Where?"

"Never mind! Why should you want to know?" he demanded, sulkily.

"Why, indeed?" echoed she, fixing her eyes upon his face; "what should your motives be to me, who have only devoted ten years of my life to

your service? What should you be to me, Jacob Wynne?"

"Well," he said. "I will no longer require such a sacrifice at your hands. Ten years are quite enough to satisfy me. Henceforth you shall be at perfect liberty to devote yourself to whom you will. I will promise not to interfere."

Margaret pressed her hand upon her heart as if to still its tumultuous throbbing, at this cruel taunt from one whom she had so much loved, and for whom, despite the discovery she had made of his baseness and unworthiness, she could not altogether stifle the old affection.

"You say this because you are irritated, Jacob," she returned. "You do not, you cannot mean it. Tell me so. Tell me that you have been only trying me all this time, and though it has made me very, very wretched, although it has thrown me into a fever and rendered me as weak as you now see me, I will forget it all, and will once more devote myself to you with the same loving devotion as in the old times when we were young, and—and happier than we are now, Jacob."

In her earnestness she rose, and going towards the copyist, placed her hand upon his arm.

"One often says in anger what he does not mean," she continued, rapidly. "I know that well. I have done so myself; and it is so with you, Jacob, is it not? I knew it must be so when you spoke such cruel words to me at the island so many weeks ago, and yet, Jacob, and yet it hurt me," she placed her hand upon her heart; "it hurt me here, when you said such words even in jest. I was not strong enough to bear them,

and they made me sick. That very night I was attacked with a fever, and from that day to this I have been stretched upon a sick-bed. Look at my face. See how thin and pale it is. I ought not to be out to-day, and only succeeded by an artifice in eluding the vigilance of my mother, who has been my faithful nurse."

"Why, then, did you come?" asked Jacob, coldly.

"Because I could not bear the intolerable weight of suspense. Those words kept ringing in my ears, and I could not cease from anxiety until I could see you and have them explained."

Margaret looked imploringly in the face of the scrivener, as she finished her appeal. She had spoken more confidently than she felt. There was little in the sullen, cruel face before her to give her encouragement. She felt that she had staked all her happiness upon a single throw,—that the answer which he gave her then and there would determine once and forever her future happiness or misery, and it might be his.

Jacob regarded the anxious face before him with the triumph that a low mind always feels when it has by any means gained an ascendency over a stronger one. The nature of Margaret was superior to his, and he knew it. It was the uneasy feeling of inferiority produced by this circumstance, that led to a mean jealousy on his part which found its gratification in any humiliation to which it was in his power to subject her.

"I do not understand," he said, deliberately, "why my words should stand in need of explanation. I endeavored to make them sufficiently intelligible."

"You do not remember what you said, Jacob. I am sure that you cannot, or you would not speak thus," she said, earnestly.

"Perhaps your memory is better," said the scrivener, sneeringly. "Possibly you will do me the favor to repeat it."

"Repeat it!"

"Yes, I said so," triumphing as he spoke over her evident distress; "come, I am listening."

He drew his chair round so as to face Margaret, and fixed his eyes cruelly upon her. Margaret was a creature of impulse. Hers was no calm, equable temperament. Her features could express trustful, confiding affection, or the intensity of scorn and hatred. She had come to make a last appeal to Jacob Wynne. He did not deserve it, but it is hard for a woman to resolve to injure a man who has been to her an object of affection. Jacob had often treated her with harshness. This she could bear, but the revelation of his perfidy, which she had heard from his own lips at Staten Island, came upon her with the force of a sudden blow, which at once prostrated her. This was an insult which she could not forgive, if his words were indeed true. In the hope, slight as it was, that it might prove to have been merely an outburst of Jacob's irritability, she had determined upon this interview that her doubts might be set at rest. Had Jacob known the purpose which was in her heart, and the precise character of the motive which had brought her to him, he would have been more cautious in exasperating a woman who had his ruin in her power. This, however, he did not know. He underrated Margaret's strength of mind; he regarded her as

one whom he might ill-treat with impunity, who might annoy him, to be sure, but was incapable of doing him any serious injury; whom he could shake off at any time, as he had resolved to do now.

When Margaret saw the triumphant smile upon his face, she felt that her worst fears were likely to be realized. Still she resolved not to forego her purpose. Dropping the pleading tone which she had hitherto employed, she said, with an outward calmness which surprised Jacob, and which she only assumed by a determined effort,—

"Be it so. Since you desire it, I will force myself to repeat those words. You remember, Jacob, the occasion of my presenting myself before you. Without my knowledge you had invited a young woman to accompany you to Staten Island."

"And did you think I was responsible to you? Would you have had me ask your gracious permission?" asked Jacob, with a sneer.

"You can tell best," said Margaret, steadily, "whether this excursion was made accidentally or purposely, without my knowledge; if the latter, it betrayed a consciousness on your part that I had a right to object."

"But I told you——"

"Wait," said Margaret, commandingly, "I will come to that by and by. I learned your plan, it matters not in what manner, and followed you; I marked your devoted attentions to your companion, and it deepened in me the sense of wrong and neglect which I had noticed for a long time. You believed me safe at home all this time."

"I wish to heaven you had been," muttered Jacob.

Unheeding the interruption, Margaret continued,—

"You will not be surprised that this should have excited some uneasiness on my part. I followed you constantly, watching for an opportunity to speak to you alone. At length you left your companion for a brief period, and then I found the opportunity I had been seeking. I ventured to expostulate with you on conduct which I considered inconsistent with your duty as a husband. Then it was, Jacob, that in your anger, you told me that I, who had lived with you for ten years as your wife, and had never for a moment forfeited or doubted my full claim to the title, that I was mistaken; that at the altar an infamous deception had been practised upon me, and the office of the clergyman was usurped by one of your own unprincipled associates, who had no legal right to perform the marriage ceremony. Have I represented all this correctly?"

"You have a most accurate memory," said Jacob. "I have no exceptions to take to your account, except on the score of its length, and the use of certain adjectives."

"Then I am to understand that this *was* no fabrication on your part, Jacob Wynne, but the plain truth?"

"Most unquestionably."

"You further gave me to understand," continued Margaret, in the same strangely calm tone, "and to-day you have repeated the intimation, that my company is unwelcome; in short, that you are weary of my society, and wish to be rid of me."

"You would have made a capital judge,

madam," said Jacob; "you are admirable at summing up. You express my meaning better than I could do it myself. I congratulate you the possession of such a talent. It will save me further trouble. Have you anything more to say?"

Jacob expected that Margaret would burst into a passion of tears and reproaches, as she had done before, and he was already gloating over her distress in anticipation. Already with cowardly malignity, he was coining in his brain some new and clever taunts with which he might add to her distress, and touch her to the quick. It was, therefore, with some degree of disappointment as well as surprise, that he was able to detect no change in her calm expression.

"Very well," she said, "I wished this matter understood between us."

Then, seeming to notice for the first time the gold upon the table, she added, indicating it with her finger, "Your affairs appear to be in a more flourishing condition than when I saw you last."

"Eh! What?" said Jacob, changing color and looking embarrassed.

"You are richer than you were," said Margaret, in the same tone. "It must have been an important service which has been so liberally rewarded."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jacob, with the apprehension of guilt, regarding her uneasily.

"Mean!" repeated Margaret, as if surprised at the question, "what should I mean? I merely expressed my surprise at your having so large a sum by you. I should judge," she continued, carelessly, "that there might be a thousand dollars there."

Jacob's agitation increased with every word that Margaret uttered. Conscious that he had committed a crime which made him liable to severe legal penalties, the significant words of the woman he had wronged excited in his mind a fear that, in some manner unknown to him, she had become cognizant of it.

So does "Conscience make cowards of us all."

How much more so in the case of the scrivener, who was cowardly at the best.

"I must insist upon knowing what you mean by these insinuations," he said, with ill-concealed anxiety.

"Insinuations, Jacob Wynne! What have I insinuated?"

"Why, then, do you speak in this manner?" said he, hesitatingly; "this money—belongs to a friend."

"Indeed!" said Margaret, looking at him steadily; "and I suppose you merely offered to count it over for him."

"Well, and if I did," said the scrivener, plucking up a little courage; "have you any objections to offer?"

"I! What objection could I possibly have? You know I have no longer a right to object to anything which you may see fit to do. By the way, you spoke of removing. When do you go?"

This cool self-possession and absence of emotion on Margaret's part puzzled Jacob, and alarmed him more than threats of vengeance would have done. He found it impossible to understand her.

"I don't know," he said, evasively, "I can't tell. Why do you ask?"

"Because," she answered, with a meaning look, "I may wish to call upon you again. There is nothing strange in my desiring occasionally to call upon an old acquaintance; is there, Jacob?"

He muttered something which was inaudible.

"But I fear I am taking up too much of your time. You know I have no further claim upon you. Farewell, Jacob, I shall not lose sight of you."

"Stay," said Jacob, who had been considerably alarmed, and who was still apprehensive that she might know more than he desired, "have you any money?"

"Yes," said Margaret, "I have this."

She displayed the half dollar, or rather what remained of it, after discharging her fare in the omnibus.

"That is very little. Take this."

He took a gold piece from the pile that lay on the table, and handed it to her. "Come, let us part friends."

"You forget, Jacob, that this gold is not yours. It belongs to a friend."

"Never mind," he muttered, "I can replace it."

"No," said she, decidedly, "I will not take it. I have no claim upon you."

She rose and passed out of the room, Jacob looking after her with an air of mingled doubt, apprehension, and perplexity.

"I wish I knew," he said to himself, "whether she has discovered anything. But it can't be possible. She appears strangely enough. Perhaps her mind is unhinged by what I have told her. But I never could have got on with her weighing

me down. We must not meet again if it can be avoided."

Jacob resolved to remove on the very next day to the more comfortable room, which he considered suited to the improvement in his circumstances.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DENUNCIATION.

If Margaret had been calm in her interview with Jacob Wynne, it was an unnatural calmness. Beneath the surface there were eddies of passionate emotion which must, sooner or later, force their way to the light.

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept over her when, relieved from the restraint which she had put upon herself in Jacob's presence, she found herself standing alone on the sidewalk beneath. Her strength, which had been only kept up thus far by excitement, now gave way utterly, and she leaned, faint and exhausted, against the side of the building. Even that proved an insufficient support. Her limbs tottered, and she fell upon the pavement.

When consciousness returned, she found herself surrounded by a crowd of persons, most of whom had been attracted by curiosity, and only one or two of whom proved of real service.

"Are you feeling better?" inquired a motherly-looking woman, gazing compassionately at the wan and wasted features of Margaret.

"Where am I?" asked Margaret, looking half bewildered at the questioner.

"You have fainted on the sidewalk. I am afraid you are not strong."

"No. I have been sick. But I remember now. I should like to see a lawyer."

Even in her weakness and physical prostration, she had not lost sight of what must henceforth be her object—revenge upon him whose perfidy and utter heartlessness she had now so fully proved.

"You mean a doctor," said the woman, a little surprised.

"No," repeated Margaret, with a touch of impatience in her voice. "I want a lawyer."

At this moment, a man in a white hat and with a very bland expression upon his features, which, however, could not boast a remarkable degree of beauty, elbowed his way vigorously through the crowd. With a graceful inclination, Mr. Sharp, whom the reader will already have recognized from the description given, proclaimed that he was an humble attorney at her service.

"If you are a lawyer, I wish to consult you, but not before so many people," said Margaret, glancing at the curious faces of the bystanders.

"I will procure a carriage, madam," said Mr. Sharp, with his usual affability, "and we will proceed at once to my office, where we shall run no risk of being disturbed."

This course was accordingly taken, somewhat to the disappointment of certain good people, who were burning for a solution of the mystery which they were convinced existed somewhere.

In a few minutes Margaret was installed in Mr. Sharp's office, and that gentleman, with profes-

sional zeal and a lively hope that the lady before him might prove a more profitable client than the state of her attire seemed to promise, waited patiently for his visitor to announce her business.

Margaret seemed to be lost in reflection, as if her mind were not wholly made up about some matter. Fearing that she might not broach the subject at all, and that he might thus lose the chance of the client which fate seemed to have thrown in his way just as he had lost Lewis Rand, Mr. Sharp thought it best to give her a gentle hint.

"As a lawyer, madam, I shall be glad to exert myself in your behalf to the best of my professional ability. Will you have the kindness, as soon as your strength is sufficiently restored, to state your case?"

Margaret aroused from her stupor. "Can you tell me," she asked, abruptly, "what punishment the law provides for forgery?"

The lawyer was taken by surprise. He wondered if his visitor had committed, or perchance was contemplating such a crime, and wished to learn how great a risk it involved.

"Forgery did I understand you to say, madam?" he inquired, partly with a view to gain time.

"Yes."

"Imprisonment for a term of years."

"You are sure it is not punished with death," she asked, eagerly.

"Not in this country. There was a time when it was so punished in England."

"How long is the usual term of imprisonment?"

"That depends, in some measure, upon the discretion of the court, which is regulated by attendant circumstances. Possibly," said the lawyer, hazarding a conjecture. as Margaret remained silent, "you have a friend, a relation perhaps (pardon me if I am wrong), who has been unfortunate,"—a delicate way of hinting at crime, —"and in whose behalf you have now come to consult me?"

"A friend!" repeated Margaret, with a bitter smile.

"I thought it possible," said Mr. Sharp, mistaking her tone for one of assent. "Well, madam, you must not allow yourself to be too much cast down. I can easily conceive that your anxiety is aroused in your friend's behalf, but if one has ingenuity there are always methods of evading the law, and if you will confide the case to me, I hope to succeed in clearing your friend."

"That is just what I do not wish."

"Pardon me," said the lawyer, in surprise. "I do not think I understand you."

"You do not. In the first place, it is not a friend in whose welfare I am interested."

"A relation?" suggested Mr. Sharp, still in the dark.

"He is nothing to me,—nothing, do you hear?" exclaimed Margaret, with fierce emphasis. "At least, not now. What he has been it is needless for you to know, or me to remember. Enough, that I have reason to hate him, that I wish to be revenged upon him, and that I ask you to lend me your assistance."

"Explain the case, madam, if you please. I will give you my best attention."

"I have sworn to be revenged upon him, and I will," said Margaret, hoarsely, rather to herself than to the lawyer. "There shall be no flinching now."

She pressed her hand upon her breast, as if to still forcibly suppress any remonstrance that might find a place there.

"This man," she continued, in a hurried tone, "has committed forgery. As yet, it is undiscovered. I wish him brought to justice."

"What has he forged?"

"A will."

"A will!" repeated Mr. Sharp, pricking up his ears with sudden interest. "May I ask how you become acquainted with the fact?"

"I witnessed the deed."

"Was the party aware of your presence?"

"Far from it. He supposed the knowledge confined to himself and one other, who instigated him to the act, and rewarded him for it. He supposed me asleep, but I saw and heard the whole from a place of concealment."

"This man is, I suppose, a copyist,—a professional writer?"

"Yes."

"And the one who employed him,—do you know his name?" asked the lawyer, with hardly concealed eagerness.

"It is Rand."

"Rand!" echoed Mr. Sharp, triumphantly. "I suspected so."

"Then you knew of this?" queried Margaret, surprised in her turn.

"No, but I am not surprised to hear it. I know Lewis Rand. He has been a client of mine."

"You will not thwart my plans?" said Margaret, apprehensively.

"On the contrary, what you have told me gives an additional inducement to further them, since I have purposes of my own which will be served thereby. Have you any corroborative evidence? Your testimony, unsupported, might not be deemed sufficient."

"I have this," said Margaret, displaying the fragment of paper which she had secured on her return from Staten Island, and which, as the reader will remember, contained the name, Rand, several times repeated in Jacob's handwriting, as well as detached sentences of the will itself. The handwriting was a close imitation of the original will.

"Ah!" said the lawyer, rubbing his hands; "that is very satisfactory. With this and your testimony, the chain of proof will be complete. Nothing stronger could be desired."

"Then you think we shall succeed?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Whatever is to be done must be done quickly," said Margaret, with a certain feverish haste; for, now that her mind was made up, her restless spirit craved immediate action. "This man—the copyist—is about to remove from his old lodgings, and, if there is any delay, he will escape. Besides, if he is apprehended at once, he will be found in possession of the price of his guilt."

"That will doubtless weigh against him. If you will furnish me with his address, I will take measures to have him immediately arrested."

The address was given and noted down. The lawyer still held the pen suspended over the

paper. "His name,—you have not mentioned that."

Margaret hesitated. There was a brief internal conflict between her old love and her present desire of revenge. The latter prevailed.

"His name," she said, in a voice which was scarcely audible, "is Jacob Wynne."

"Jacob Wynne! Good!"

Mr. Sharp noted down the name in a business-like way, utterly unconscious of the struggle in the mind of his client, before she could resolve to utter it. When, however, it was pronounced, and she felt that the decisive step was taken, her mind, as is common in such cases, became more tranquil, and she composed herself to wait for the event.

"Will you remain here," asked Mr. Sharp, "while I go out and cause this man to be arrested? I will be back shortly, and will then report progress."

Margaret inclined her head in the affirmative. Indeed, she had no other place to go, and she was already so exhausted that she could not go out into the streets, and wander hither and thither, as she must otherwise have done.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ARREST.

THERE had been an indefinable something in Margaret's manner during her interview with the copyist, which left an unpleasant impression upon his mind. The guilt, of which he was

secretly conscious, increased his natural cowardice. He felt that, on all accounts, it would be better to lose no time in his anticipated removal. He had intended to leave the next day. He would go to-day.

Acting upon this resolution, he began to pack the contents of the drawers into a trunk. He was in the midst of this occupation, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," he said, carelessly, without at once turning to the door.

Mr. Sharp entered, and coughed slightly, with the design of attracting the scrivener's attention.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Jacob; "I am quite busy, preparing for a removal. Could you defer your business till—say day after to-morrow?"

Our lawyer was one who never, under any circumstances, lost his politeness. With an affability which seemed indicative of the kindest feelings, he said, affably, "I believe I address Mr. Wynne?"

"You are right," said Jacob, who still labored under the impression that the lawyer was one who required his services as copyist.

"Mr. Jacob Wynne?"

"Yes."

"A copyist?"

"Yes, but I fear that I shall not be able to accommodate you to-day, being, as you see, on the point of removal."

"You mistake my errand, Mr. Wynne. I have no doubt that you are a skilful copyist. Indeed, I have great reason to think so, and do not doubt

that, if I were in need of anything in your line, I should find it worth while to apply to you."

"What, then, is your business?" demanded Jacob, mystified.

"I regret to say, Mr. Wynne," said Mr. Sharp, losing none of his affability, "that I have an unpleasant duty to perform. I have obtained a warrant for your arrest."

"My arrest!" repeated the copyist, his sallow face exhibiting unmistakable terror.

"I regret to say so."

"On what charge?" ejaculated Jacob, too well surmising its nature.

"Forgery."

Jacob's lips became bloodless, and his cheeks assumed an ashen hue, for at heart he was a very coward. In the moment of trial, none could be more craven.

"I regret to disturb you," said Mr. Sharp, stepping back to the door and opening it. "Mr. Officer, you will do your duty."

An officer, who had been stationed just outside the door, now entered, and formally arrested Jacob Wynne.

It is scarcely possible for a human being to exhibit more abject terror than the miserable copyist, under this unforeseen blow. All his strength seemed to have departed from him. When commanded by the officer to rise and accompany him, he attempted to do so; but his limbs trembled so, that he was scarcely able to comply.

"A clear case," thought the lawyer.

"Really, my dear friend," said Mr. Sharp, in a

tone of expostulation, "you are suffering your feelings to run away with you. You must be more calm and collected."

"Is there no way of escape?" asked Jacob, in a tone of agonizing entreaty. "Oh, spare me, gentlemen, and indeed you shall be well rewarded. See, I have gold!" and he hurriedly unlocked a desk on the table beside him. "Take what you will, but let me go."

Mr. Sharp's eyes glistened as he caught sight of the gold; but, perceiving no way in which he could avail himself of it, he assumed a tone of outraged integrity.

"What, sir!" he exclaimed; "can you, for an instant, suppose that we would be guilty of interfering with the course of justice for a paltry bribe? Thank Heaven!" he continued, fervently; "my integrity was never called in question. Through a long and varied professional career, I have steadily resisted all the temptations which have been brought to bear upon me. Not though your bribe were a thousand times as large, would I hesitate for a moment. Far better poverty and the consciousness of unsullied integrity, than wealth and a dishonored name! I have no doubt my worthy companion unites with me in this sentiment."

"Of course I do," said that functionary, gruffly.

"Then is there no chance?" asked Jacob, looking appealing from one to the other.

"Of course, if you are innocent, you will be discharged from custody. The law only punishes the guilty."

This remark did not seem to yield Jacob much comfort.

"I am sorry to hurry you," said the officer; "but I cannot wait much longer."

Jacob rose feebly, and descended the stairs supported by the officer.

When the wretched copyist came in sight of the Tombs, his strength again deserted him, and he became as weak as an infant. Supported on either side he passed through the portal, and the heavy door swung back upon its hinges.

When he had been conducted to his cell and left alone, he flung himself in an agony of terror and apprehension upon the pallet, clenching his hands in impotent fury, while he muttered to himself, "Margaret has done this! Margaret has done this!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A WOMAN'S HEART.

When the lawyer returned to his office, he found Margaret seated in the same place and in the same attitude in which he had left her. She started when he came into the room, and fixed her eyes eagerly upon him with a look of anxious inquiry.

"Well," said the lawyer, rubbing his hands cheerfully, "we have succeeded. The bird is fairly caged."

"Where have you carried him?" asked Margaret, in a low voice.

"To the Tombs!"

"How did he appear when you arrested him?" Margaret asked.

"Appear! Frightened to death. I never saw a person more thoroughly terrified than he was. He even had the temerity to offer me money if I would aid him to escape," said Mr. Sharp, in a burst of virtuous indignation.

Margaret sat for a short time in the same attitude of abstraction in which the lawyer found her. She had succeeded, then. He who had wronged and ill-treated her was already in a prison-cell. The revenge for which she had longed was now hers. Yet it failed to give her that satisfaction she had in anticipation. In the moment of her success she realized that revenge was like a two-edged sword, wounding those who wielded it, as well as him against whom it was directed. Yet would she recall what she had done? No, at least not yet. Her brain was in a whirl of excitement, a prey to conflicting thoughts. She must get into the fresh air. She rose from the chair, and with unsteady feet walked slowly towards the door, without a word.

The lawyer looked at her with a puzzled glance. He could not read her history. He had expected that she would rejoice in the intelligence he brought. Instead, she seemed bewildered.

As she lifted the latch, he said, hesitatingly, "In case I should wish to communicate with you, where shall I call?"

"I will call here," said Margaret, briefly, and passed out.

"A queer subject," soliloquized Mr. Sharp, as he lighted a fragrant Havana, and sat down to a meditative smoke. "Yet she may prove a client not to be despised. If things work right, I shall

obtain through her a hold upon Lewis Rand which I shall be pretty apt to use. He has thrown me off without ceremony. He may find it to his advantage to cultivate my acquaintance. Well, well, the world turns round, and it is only fair that I should be at the top, part of the time."

Meanwhile Margaret was making her way through the streets, changing her direction more than once, yet tending ever nearer and nearer to one point. At length she stood before the City Prison! With blanched cheek and aching heart she looked upward at the huge pile. She wondered in what quarter of the prison they had placed Jacob, and how he bore his confinement. What a mystery is a woman's heart! When she had thought of him only as prosperous and triumphant, her heart had been swayed by vindictive passion. Now in his humiliation she felt drawn towards him—she felt even compassion for him. For more than an hour she stood gazing at the dismal structure. Already the sun had set, and the darkness was coming on. It closed about her wrapping her in its dusky mantle. It was one of those autumn days that are succeeded by a chill evening. She shivered as the cold penetrated her wretched shawl which scantily served as a protection, and seeing a sheltered passage-way nearly opposite where she was standing, walked there and sat down upon steps concealed from the sight of the few passers-by in a state of exhaustion. Overtasked nature succumbed, and she sank into a troubled sleep.

At an early hour in the morning she was aroused to consciousness again, and urged by an impulse which she could not resist, crossed

the street, made her way to the office of the prison, and made known her desire to see a prisoner.

"Who do you wish to see?"

"Jacob Wynne."

The officer in attendance turned to a book containing a list of the unhappy persons who had found a home within these walls.

"Yes," he said, reading the entry; "Jacob Wynne, arrested on a charge of forgery. He was brought here only yesterday."

"May I see him?" Margaret asked, eagerly.

"It is hardly possible. The hour at which visitors are admitted has not arrived. You must wait till ten o'clock."

"I have been waiting all night," said Margaret.

"All night. Where?"

"In the street."

There was something in her tone that struck the officer. He regarded her compassionately.

"You will make an exception in my favor? I am his wife."

"I do not know," he hesitated. "I may be exceeding my authority." But the sharp anxiety in Margaret's face decided him. "I will do it once, as a special favor."

Margaret did not thank him in words, but her face was eloquent with gratitude. The sharp lines of anxiety softened, and an expression of relief succeeded.

She followed him through the long, damp corridor, until they stood before the cell tenanted by Jacob Wynne. Margaret was admitted, a faint light handed her, and then the door was locked as before.

The prisoner was stretched on the hard pallet, with his face buried in it. He seemed in a dull stupor, the result of his excessive fear. He did not even look up as the door was opened, but his frame shook with a convulsive tremor.

Margaret advanced to the bed, and kneeling, touched his arm gently, while she uttered his name softly.

"Jacob!"

He started, and looked wildly at his visitor. He did not seem to comprehend that it was Margaret in real presence who knelt beside him.

"Away! away!" he exclaimed, shuddering at her touch. "Why must I be tormented before my time?"

"Don't you know me, Jacob? I am Margaret."

He looked at her half in doubt, and said, sullenly, "What more do you want with me? Is it not enough that you have sent me here? Have you come to finish your work?"

"I have come to save you."

"To save me? Then it was not you who caused my arrest?"

"Yes, Jacob, but I did not know what I was doing. I was hurried away by passion. Forgive me, Jacob."

"Your regrets will avail little now," he said, bitterly. "You have placed me here, and here I must stay. Oh, it is horrible," he said, shuddering, "to be shut up in this damp, noisome cell!"

"Listen, Jacob," said Margaret; "your case is not so hopeless as you imagine. It was at my instance that you were arrested. Heaven knows

that I had some cause. But I am sorry for it now. If you are convicted, it can only be upon my testimony. Should I absent myself from your trial, nothing could be proved against you, and you would be released."

"Will you do this, Margaret?" asked the prisoner, hope once more kindling in his heart. "If you will, I will forever bless you. My fate hangs upon your decision. You don't know how I have suffered already, in the few hours I have stayed here. Have compassion upon me, Margaret, and I will take you back again as my wife. In one respect I have deceived you. Our marriage was genuine. Forgive me for trying to persuade you otherwise."

An expression of earnest gratitude and relief overspread Margaret's face. "Thank you for those words, Jacob. It cancels all the harshness and all the wrong that I have met at your hands. Then I am really your wedded wife?"

"Yes, Margaret," said Jacob, humbly, for confinement had wrought a salutary change in his deportment; "I confess that I wished to convince you of the contrary. I even meditated, in my wickedness, marrying another for her wealth, not because I loved her. But it is all over now, and I am glad of it. Only release me from this imprisonment, and I promise——"

"Promise nothing," said Margaret; "I do not wish to take advantage of your present situation, when perhaps you might be induced to promise that which you would afterwards repent."

"But, I am sincere."

"You may be now, but will it last? I do not wish," she resumed, with proud composure, "to

force myself upon you against your will. You have already freed me from my chief trouble, in acknowledging that our marriage was not the idle mockery you would have had me believe. Farther than that, I require nothing of you. If, at the end of six months from your release, you still desire that I should come to you, I will. Till that time has passed, it is best that we should be to each other as strangers."

Margaret spoke with calmness and dignity. Even Jacob perceived this, and he could not help feeling an unwonted admiration for the woman he had spurned. He had never felt her value till, by her own act, a wall of separation was built up between them.

"I have no right to complain," said Jacob, humbly. "I do not deserve your confidence, Margaret; but you shall find, hereafter, that I am more trustworthy than you think."

"Heaven grant it, Jacob! Do not think me unkind or vindictive, if I refuse at once to burden you with myself. I should not survive a second repulse. What I have suffered from our estrangement, God only knows. But it shall be forgotten."

"How long shall I be obliged to remain here?"

"I do not know. At any rate, only till I can arrange for your release. I will lose no time about it."

The turnkey appeared, and Margaret went forth from the cell, leaving Jacob inexpressibly relieved by the promise she had made. He knew Margaret well enough to feel assured that she would keep it.

Not less relieved was Margaret. The black cloud which hung over her was dissipated. Now she could resign herself even to the alienation of Jacob's affection, since she was assured that, by the laws of God and man, she was still his wedded wife. He had treated her most basely and unworthily, that she knew full well; but this guilt and mortification, at least, she was spared. She felt new strength in her limbs, new cheerfulness in her heart. She bent her steps at once to Mr. Sharp's office. To him she made known her change of determination, and her desire to suppress her evidence, that the prisoner might be released.

Mr. Sharp was embarrassed. This sudden whim, as he called it, threatened to disarrange all his plans.

He paced the office, while Margaret followed him with an anxious look.

"Is it too late?" she inquired.

"I will tell you, madam, how the matter stands," said the lawyer, suddenly, taking a seat opposite Margaret. "By this false will, whose forgery you can attest, a large estate has been diverted from the legal heirs,—a father and child,—highly estimable, but very poor, and been seized upon by an artful villain,—a cousin,—whose best efforts have been given to the task of sowing dissension between the late Mr. Rand and the son to whom I allude. Now the question arises, whether it is right, for the sake of saving a guilty man, to perpetuate this great wrong, and keep the rightful heirs out of their inheritance? Do you dare to take upon your soul that responsibility?"

Mr. Sharp argued well. Let not the reader give him too much credit for disinterested love of right. It should not be forgotten, that he rightly anticipated from Mr. Ford a liberal reward for his professional exertions.

"What would you have me do?" asked Margaret, in a troubled tone. "I do not wish to aid injustice, *but this man is my husband!*"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lawyer, surprised. "Yet you gave the information that led to his arrest."

"I knew not what I did. I was angry and vindictive. But is there nothing that can be done to restore the estate without the sacrifice of my husband?"

Mr. Sharp considered a moment.

"I think I can manage it," he said; "but it will be necessary for your husband to remain in confinement for a few days longer. Will you consent to this?"

"Freely."

"Then I will see Mr. Rand, and I think I can so far work upon his fears as to extort from him at least a portion of what he has so criminally acquired. Meanwhile, it will be best for you to keep out of the way; only let me know where to find you in case I require your presence."

Thus matters were arranged. Margaret returned to her mother, not as she left her, dull and dispirited, but with a cheerfulness for which the latter strove in vain to account.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GREEK MEETS GREEK.

THE novelty of possession had not yet palled upon Lewis Rand. It seemed to him still like a dream, of whose reality he could scarcely assure himself. Day after day he wandered through the magnificently-furnished rooms of the stately dwelling, and surveyed them with a proud rising of the heart. In the evening, as he sat before the grate fire in the library, for the evenings were growing cool, he would run over in his mind the long list of his possessions, and launch forth in imagination upon plans which he meant to carry out. If by chance the image of the cousin whom he had defrauded presented itself, it was hastily dismissed.

One evening, as he sat idly before the fire, indulging in complacent thoughts, a servant announced a visitor.

"Bring him in here," said Lewis, albeit somewhat surprised at an intrusion at that late hour. This surprise was not lessened when, in the visitor, he recognized Mr. Sharp.

The lawyer advanced with an air of easy assurance, and as he glanced about him observed, rubbing his hands, "Really, Mr. Rand, you are quite charmingly situated. I am reminded of what I have read of the Mohammedan Paradise. To make it complete, you only need a houri."

"Yet, Paradise as it is," said Lewis, signifi-

cantly, for he had neither forgotten nor forgiven the lawyer's treachery, "it is not free from the intrusion of evil spirits."

"Indeed!" returned Mr. Sharp, with an admirable air of unconsciousness, "you surprise me."

"Not more than I am surprised to see you here. If it is not taking too great a liberty, might I inquire the motive of your visit? I presume it is not the pleasure of seeing me."

"That's undoubtedly one of my motives," said the lawyer, affably; "but, as you surmise, it is not the only one. I wish to speak with you on important business."

"Perhaps you have made out a bill of charge for the very valuable services you have rendered me?"

"Thank you," said Mr. Sharp, bowing; "I cannot express the gratification I feel at this generous commendation on the part of one in whose behalf I have put forth my poor efforts."

"Sir," said Lewis Rand, rising impatiently, "you cannot hope to deceive me by your imperturbable assurance. You serve my interests! You put forth efforts in my behalf! You, who turned traitor to my interests, and sought by every means in your power to defeat my plans! This, I suppose, is your idea of legal fidelity."

"I fancy," said the lawyer, boldly, "that I have been as faithful to you as you to your uncle. If we are to indulge in recrimination, it may be that I shall not come off second-best."

"What do you mean, sir? You are disposed to be impertinent. Can you deny that it was through

your agency that my cousin was informed of that which I most desired to conceal from him?"

"And thereby," said the lawyer, composedly, "enabled a father and son to meet before Death came in to separate them forever upon the earth."

"This, then, is the construction which you put upon your conduct," said Lewis, with a sneer. "I congratulate you upon your elevated sentiments."

"Thank you," said Mr. Sharp, bowing modestly. "Appreciation is always soothing to the feelings. Praise from such a source makes me proud, indeed."

Lewis was incensed to find the lawyer adopting the tone which he had hitherto arrogated to himself. That a briefless attorney should dare to indulge in sarcasm at his expense was a piece of unparalleled presumption.

"I need not say," he remarked with a smile of conscious power, "how much I regret putting to inconvenience a man of such elevated and Christian sentiments as yourself. Yet I am under the necessity of reminding you that you have in your possession some three hundred dollars which I intrusted to you for a particular purpose. That sum I have present occasion for. If you are unable to pay me, I may feel called upon to resort to measures which may be mutually disagreeable."

"I am glad you mentioned it," said Mr. Sharp, blandly. "By the way, you can show proof that you did intrust me with this money?"

Lewis colored with mortification. He had no such proof, and his threat was futile.

"You perceive," said the lawyer, nonchalantly,

"that if I were dishonest, I might deny the trust. But such is not my intention. Will you favor me with a slip of paper?"

Mr. Sharp made out a bill for professional services amounting to three hundred dollars. This he receipted, and handed to Lewis.

"I believe we are now quits," he said.

Baffled once more, Lewis turned upon the lawyer with a fury which he no longer attempted to conceal.

"Then," said he, "I see no further reason for continuing this interview."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Sharp, "my business is not yet completed; I came here in behalf of your cousin, my client, Robert Rand."

"Perhaps," said Lewis, with a sneer, "he has come to his senses, and decided to accept the offer I made him the day after the funeral. You may inform him that he is too late. The offer is withdrawn."

"As to that, your message is unnecessary, since he has not the slightest disposition to accept it."

"Indeed! Then may I beg to know with what message you are charged?"

"He will agree to receive nothing less than half the estate."

"He is quite moderate. You are sure that he does not demand the whole?"

"Quite so. He has no disposition to impoverish you, notwithstanding the wrongs he has received at your hands."

"He is considerate," said Lewis, "very considerate! How soon does he expect an answer to his modest proposal?"

"This very night."

"And suppose," said Lewis (of course, it is highly improbable), "but suppose I should decline complying with this very moderate demand of my worthy cousin? What then?"

Lewis regarded Mr. Sharp with an exulting smile.

"Allow me, before answering your question, to propose one of my own."

"Certainly, Mr. Sharp," said Lewis, graciously, already exulting in the other's discomfiture; "I shall be happy to give you information upon any point you may desire."

He leaned back and surveyed the lawyer with an insolent smile. But his triumph was short-lived.

"Are you acquainted with a copyist named Wynne,—Jacob Wynne?"—asked Mr. Sharp, looking searchingly at his late client.

Lewis Rand started, and his sallow face grew red and white by turns.

"Well," said he, with a vain effort to speak carelessly, "and if I do?"

He is now an inmate of the Tombs," said Mr. Sharp, significantly.

Lewis rose from his seat, and paced the room. At length he paused before the lawyer.

"Why do you tell me this?" he demanded fiercely, "What have I to do with a paltry scrivener? What is it to me that he is in prison? Doubtless he has been there before, and you too, for ought I know."

"He was arrested on a charge of forgery," said the lawyer, slowly, watching the effect of this announcement on his companion.

Lewis sat down, brought to bay at last, and

leaned his head upon the table. He no longer dared to evade the subject. He felt that the danger was imminent, and must be confronted.

"How was his arrest brought about?" he inquired.

"Through the agency of a woman,—his wife, I believe,—who, in consequence of some quarrel, wishes to revenge herself upon this Jacob. When the forgery was committed she was a concealed spectator, and saw and heard the whole. *She can swear to the person who employed Jacob Wynne to do this service!* Nor is this all. She has a piece of paper—a torn half sheet—which was used by the copyist to try his pen on that night. It contains a name several times repeated."

Lewis did not inquire what name.

"Go on," he said, hoarsely.

"This woman—this Margaret—fell in with me, and applied to me to help her. It suited my purpose to do so, although her poverty will prevent my receiving any recompense from her."

"Then she is poor," said Lewis, thoughtfully. "Where is she?"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Sharp, reading the purpose of Lewis in his face; "that is a question which I cannot answer."

"Has Jacob divulged anything since he was imprisoned?"

"That was not needful. I will at once speak to the point, Mr. Rand. It can be abundantly proved that this forgery was committed at your instigation. Once let this be known, and you become amenable to the same penalties which now menace your instrument. One word from me will carry you to prison to-night. There is no

chance of escape. I have obtained a warrant, and an officer is waiting at the door. But there is an alternative."

Lewis summoned all the energies of his crafty and subtile mind to devise some method of escape. But he was entangled in a labyrinth from which he could not extricate himself.

"Give me till to-morrow," he said.

"I regret that I cannot do so," said the lawyer, politely.

"Name your proposition, then," he said sullenly.

Mr. Sharp drew from his pocket a legal instrument conveying one half of all his estates to Robert Rand, some time known as Robert Ford. It was drawn up with all the precision and technicality required by the law. It only needed the signature of Lewis.

Lewis read it with dark and lowering face. "I cannot sign it," he said, desperately.

"Then I fear you must exchange this warm fireside for an apartment less luxurious."

"Fate is against me," muttered Lewis, moved by this threat. "Since it must be done."

"Will you have the kindness to summon two of your servants to witness the document?" said the lawyer.

Lewis rang the bell sharply.

"Jacqueline, call Antoine, and come in yourself."

Lewis signed his name.

"Will that satisfy you?" he said, bitterly.

"Perfectly," said Mr. Sharp, bowing.

"Then, Antoine, you will show this gentleman to the door."

Mr. Sharp bowed graciously, and withdrew. A moment more, and Lewis was left alone,—a prey to the keenest disappointment. Troubled as he was by the loss of one half of his possessions, there were two things that troubled him even more. He had been out-generalled by one of his own tools, whom he had looked upon with contempt, and his cousin, whom he detested more than ever, was now as wealthy as himself.

Lewis Rand paced the library with disordered steps, till far into the night, and, when he retired to his chamber, it was not to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SLAVE OF THE NEEDLE.

Perhaps no employment is more confining and more poorly compensated than that of sewing. The narrow choice allowed to women, who are compelled to labor for their livelihood, leads to an unhealthy and disastrous competition in this department of toil, and enables employers to establish a disgracefully low scale of prices.* Fifteen hours out of the twenty-four are sometimes spent in unremitting labor, the results of which will scarcely keep soul and body together. The cook or housemaid enjoys a degree of comfort, and commands an income (including board) absolutely unattainable by the slave of the needle.

* The reader is referred to an interesting series of papers, entitled "Needle and Garden," published in the "Atlantic Monthly" during the year 1865.

Hard work and an absence of nourishing food were beginning to tell on the delicate frame of Martha Grey. An expert needle-woman, she commanded, in good times, an abundant supply of work. But times had changed. The shops gave out less work, while the number who desired it seemed rather to have increased than diminished. The natural result followed,—a reduction in the compensation, already disgracefully low. Many could not obtain a chance to work at any price. Martha was allowed her usual supply, but at prices twenty per cent lower than she had before received. The heart of the poor seamstress sank within her, as she walked home with a bundle of work, for which she was to be paid at the new rate. How was she to economize? It seemed before as if her wants were reduced to the minimum, and yet she had been able to lay by nothing. In addition to this, her health, never very firm, had shown some indications of failure. She was troubled with occasional dizziness and frequent nervous headaches, which rendered her enforced slavery to the needle a torture, but one from which she could not deliver herself.

But one alternative presented itself. She must contract her necessary expenditures, or increase her hours of work. She did not know how to compass the one, while the other would probably lead to sickness. She attempted a middle course. On a scantier diet she strove to work an hour more daily. The result was what might have been anticipated. Nature succumbed. One morning Helen, on returning from rehearsal, entered Martha's room unceremoniously, as was her wont. Great was her dismay on discovering her friend

lying insensible on the floor. Her work, on which she had been engaged up to the moment of her attack, had fallen from her hands, and lay beside her.

Helen was not unused to such cases. Though quite terrified, she had sufficient self-possession to apply the proper retoratives.

Martha soon opened her eyes, and, recognizing Helen, smiled faintly.

"How do you feel, Martha?" inquired Helen, anxiously.

"I am afraid I am going to be sick," said Martha.

"When did you first feel it?"

"It has been coming on for several days. I have not been free from the headache for a week."

"Why didn't you tell me before?" asked Helen, reproachfully.

"Because you could have done me no good, my dear child."

"Let me help you to the bed. Now you must lie down, and try to rest. I suppose you have worked just as usual, too, you imprudent Martha."

"I can't afford to lie still, you know."

"You can afford to lie still better than to ruin your health."

By this time Martha was lying on the bed.

"If you will pass me my work, Helen, I think I can sew while I am lying down."

"No, Martha," said Helen, shaking her head; "I shall not allow it. You are wholly unfit for work. You must have a good long rest."

"But, Helen——"

"I know what you would say,—that you can't afford to lie still. Just as if you had no friends, you unreasonable child. For a week to come, you must not touch your needle. During that time I will bring in your meals to you."

"But Helen——"

"Now don't be perverse, Martha. Papa says I am a tyrant, and I mean to be in this case. To make sure that you don't touch your work, I shall carry it away with me, and finish it myself."

"But, Helen, you have your father to care for. I cannot consent to become a burden upon you."

"Are you aware, Martha, how rich I am? For some weeks past, I have spent scarcely more than half my income. You see, therefore, that I am abundantly able to do what little I propose. But I shan't allow you to talk any more. Try to go to sleep, and I will come in pretty soon. Mind I find you better."

Helen left the room with the work in her hand. Martha ceased her opposition. She felt that the time had come when labor was no longer possible. She must have rest. How grateful the thought that, for a week, she should be free from the drudgery of the needle,—that her busy fingers might be folded in idleness, without the troubled thought that her bread depended upon her exertions. She lay back, and a sense of delicious rest came to her. She did not try to look beyond the week of rest. That seemed a long and blissful eternity. She was almost too weary to think. The sharp pain became less poignant, and at last she fell asleep. She slept for three hours, and, when she woke, it was to see the kind face of Helen bending over her.

"How do you feel now, Martha?"

"Better, much better."

"Have you slept well?"

"Yes, I have slept nearly all the time since you were in? How long is that?"

"I came in at eleven. It is now nearly three."

"Is it so long?"

"I thought you must be hungry, Martha, so I have brought in some chicken-broth for you. I hope you will like it."

"Some chicken-broth? O Helen, I am afraid you have made it on purpose for me."

"Well, and if I have?"

"I can't bear to think I am making you so much trouble."

"Then I will relieve you by saying that I didn't make it expressly for you. Papa and I had it for dinner, and papa seemed to relish it amazingly. I don't know when he has eaten so hearty a dinner."

"I am glad of that. I think I shall like it, too. The smell of it quite revives me. I will get up immediately."

"No, you shall stay where you are. Wait a moment and I will bring back a pillow from our room. Then I can prop you up in bed, and you shall eat in bed as the French do. Really, Martha, you are getting to be quite a fashionable lady."

Martha's sickness had been the result in part of a lack of proper food. The chicken-broth was relished as much as Helen could desire.

"I knew you would like it, Martha. Why, you are beginning to look better already."

"I think I shall be able to go to work to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, nor this week. It will take you at least a week to recover."

"But, Helen——"

"That is the third time you have said 'But, Helen.' Do you know, you unreasonable creature, that I allow no disobedience? I have undertaken to cure you, and I mustn't have you interfering."

"But it will not take a week for me to get well."

"Don't tell me that. I know the meaning of those pale cheeks. I ought to have noticed them before. In a few days, when you are strong enough, we will all take an excursion together, that is, papa and you and I, and perhaps Herbert—I mean Mr. Coleman—will go too. I want to see a little color in those cheeks."

"How kind you are, Helen!" said Martha, gratefully.

"Wouldn't you be as kind to me, if I were sick instead of you? tell me that, Martha?"

"Yes, I hope I should."

"Then you see there is no reason for thanking me. I dare say I shall take a fancy to fall sick some day when you are quite well, and call you in to take care of me. I warn you beforehand that I shall make a dreadfully cross patient."

Martha smiled. There was something contagious in Helen's light heart and exuberance of cheerfulness. The world seemed a great deal brighter to her than it had done a few hours before.

"Now, Martha, as it must be dreadfully tiresome lying there staring at that white-washed wall, I will tell you what I am going to do. I was passing a circulating library just now, when I thought I would run in and get something to read to you. Shall you like it?"

"Very much. It is a long time since I have had a chance to read anything."

"It will interest me, too. If you feel like it, I will sit down, and commence it now."

"I wish you would."

Helen drew a chair up to the bedside and began to read.

The book was a work of fiction, the heroine one who had to struggle with life very much as they had done. It was the work of a superior writer, and written with a charm of style that made it additionally attractive.

Helen read fifty pages, when the approach of evening made it necessary for her to pause.

"I will come in to-morrow morning, and read a little while," she said. "Good night, Martha. I suppose I must be getting ready for the theatre."

It was on this evening that Mr. Sharp had the memorable interview with Lewis Rand, which resulted in restoring to Helen and her father a magnificent fortune.

CHAPTER XL.

UNCLE ZEBINA'S OFFER.

HELEN and the young artist, who roomed opposite, remained fast friends. From the evening when, by a fortunate chance, he was enabled to defend her from insult he established himself as her evening escort from the theatre. These daily walks enabled each better to understand the other. They became mutual confidants. Helen indulged in sanguine anticipations of the success of her father's invention,—anticipations in which the young man's practical sense could not permit him to join, yet he was so careful of Helen's feelings, that he never, by a word, sought to undermine her perfect trust in her father's ability to achieve success.

Herbert, too, had his dreams of fame and fortune. He was an enthusiastic lover of his art. No future seemed so bright to him as that in which he figured himself an artist, achieving fame by his works. Others might become generals, judges, statesmen; he desired nothing better than to be admitted into the confidence of Nature, and to become her interpreter.

Many were the pleasant conversations on art which he held with Helen. She looked up to him with affectionate reverence, and believed in him fully. The compact into which they had entered, to regard each other as brother and sister, had been faithfully kept. Not seldom Herbert was

an invited guest at Mr. Ford's table. Helen presided on such occasions with proud delight, and with an assumption of matronly dignity, which lent her new charms in the eyes of her father and the young artist, who felt his isolation relieved by admittance to the humble home of the inventor.

But of late Helen perceived with some concern, not unmingled with surprise, that Herbert had grown less social and communicative. A shadow seemed to rest upon his features. She tried in gentle ways to lure him on to talk of himself, but without success. Something was evidently troubling him, and she was anxious to learn what it was.

She was saved the trouble of inquiring, for the young artist finally spoke himself. It was on the evening of the same day that Margaret was taken sick.

"My little sister," said Herbert, "you have perhaps observed a change in me within a few days."

"Yes, Herbert; I have been afraid that you were sick or in trouble, and I wanted to ask you what it was."

"I *am* sick, Helen, sick at heart; I believe disappointment is harder to bear than physical pain, especially when, as in my case, it is the disappointment of a long-cherished hope. You know how often I have talked to you about art, and how I longed to achieve name and fame as an artist."

"Yes, Herbert, you surely have not changed your mind."

"Never!" said the young man, fervently.

"Never has art appeared to me so divinely beautiful as now, when I fear I must renounce it. Never has my longing to attain its coveted rewards been stronger. And to think I must give it all up after the brief dream of enjoyment in which I have indulged,—this is, indeed, hard."

"But why," said Helen, puzzled; "why, if you still love it as much as ever, do you renounce it?"

"My little sister," said the artist, sadly, "it is money that rules the world. Before its sway we must all bow, willing or unwilling. It is the want of money that drives me to abandon that which is the chief joy of my life."

"But, Herbert, can't you sell your pictures?"

"In art it is a crime to be a young man. If I were only well known! But I look too much like a boy. Don't think," he added, hastily, "that I consider this the only impediment to my success. I have doubtless much, very much, to learn. There is great room for improvement, and if I could I should be content to work on for years without selling a picture, striving only to improve myself, not achieving, but learning to achieve. Yet I have seen paintings sold for generous sums, on account of the artist's name, no better than mine."

"I am sure your 'Country Farm-house' is a beautiful painting," said Helen, enthusiastically. "There must be a great many that would like to buy it."

Herbert smiled bitterly.

"I tried to sell it, yesterday, to a dealer. He received me coldly, and after inquiring what else I had painted declined to buy it on any terms. Another offered me ten dollars, a little more than

the cost of the frame. I had the curiosity to inquire the price of another painting which he had for sale, which I should certainly not admit to be superior to my own, and was told that it was one hundred and fifty dollars. One hundred and fifty dollars! if I could only realize that sum for mine, it would enable me to work six months longer. But wishes are cheap. Yesterday I decided to give up all my dreams of art, and go back to my country home."

"O Herbert, what a pity!"

"Just as I had come to this conclusion I received a letter from an uncle of mine in my native town, which confirmed my resolution. He keeps a country store, partly grocery, partly dry goods, and wants an assistant. He writes that, so far as he can learn, I don't find painting very profitable,—but hold, I will read you the letter."

Pausing before a shop window, Herbert took from his pocket a letter inclosed in a coarse yellow envelope, and read it as follows:—

"DEAR NEPHEW,—

"I am in good health, and hope you are enjoying the same blessing. Your folks are pretty smart. Your father sold his yearling calf last week, and got a pretty good price for it. I expect you are not making much money by your painting. I always thought it a foolish piece of business letting you go into such an uncertain trade, and so I told brother, but he wouldn't listen to me, though I expect now he is beginning to think about as I do. If it had been house painting now, there'd have been some sense in that. There's Josiah Watson is making his two dollars and a

half a day straight along, and I don't believe you're making a quarter of that. ('He's right there,' interpolated Herbert.) Now I'm going to make you an offer, and if you're wise you'll accept it. I'm getting old, and I find my business increasing. I need help in the store, and I'd rather give the situation to one that's kin to me than to a stranger, especially as I can trust you, and may be I might get deceived in another. I'm willing to pay thirty-five dollars a month, and more when you've got a little used to things, so you can move round handy. I shall want you to begin work the first of next month. That'll give you a fortnight to settle up your painting business in the city.

"Now, nephew Herbert, I've made you a fair offer, and you'll do well to accept it. Your father thinks as I do about it; and the folks, I know, will like to have you at home again. I don't want to make no promises, but bimeby I may find myself obliged to take a partner, and of course, if you give satisfaction, as I've no doubt you will, I sha'n't be very apt to go out of the family. I shall want to hear from you as soon as you have made up your mind. Your aunt Desire sends her love, and hopes you will come. She would like to have you bring her a new pair of spectacles from the city. Her old pair got broken the other day (your cousin Mary stepped on them), and she's pestered about seeing.

"Your uncle,

"Zebina Pratt."

"A brilliant offer, isn't it?" said the young artist. "I am invited to give up all my high aspirations,—all my dreams of artistic eminence,—

and take my place behind the counter of a country-store, to weigh out tea and sugar for Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, and chaffer with Mrs. Thompson about the extra half cent on a yard of calico. And all for thirty-five dollars a month!"

"The offer seems kindly meant," said Helen.

"Yes, there is no doubt of that. Uncle Zebina is a worthy and kind-hearted man. I have no doubt he thinks he is consulting my best interests in making me such a proposal. And doubtless he is, so far as his views of life are concerned. I should be pretty sure to be admitted into partnership after a while, and eventually to succeed my uncle in business. I dare say I should become a thrifty trader, be elected selectman, assessor, town clerk, and perhaps in time be elected to a seat in the legislature. That is not so bad, is it? And what has art to offer me that will outweigh all these advantages? It will gratify my æsthetic tastes; it will give me that which my soul craves; it will open to me a world of beauty in which I can revel; but, alas! it will not give me bread. Helen, it is bread and butter that must decide this question. I believe I must send my uncle an affirmative answer. I must bid farewell to art, and sell soap and sugar. What do you advise?"

There was a bitterness in the young man's tone that pained Helen. Accustomed to think for her father, she began to think for him. What would be best? It was not a question to be hastily decided. Bread and butter, humble and prosaic as it is, is not to be slighted. Yet she was convinced that Herbert would be very unhappy if transferred to his uncle's store.

"I don't know what to say, Herbert," said Helen, at length. "I want to think it over. When do you propose to write to your uncle?"

"I can wait till day after to-morrow."

"Then I will think it over till then. Perhaps, between us, we can think of something that will keep you in the city. I don't know what I should do without you. Next to my father, I should miss you."

"And one of my chief regrets in leaving the city would be that I must leave behind my little sister," said the young artist, affectionately.

"Thank you, Herbert; good night!"

"Good night, Helen."

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. SHARP MAKES AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION.

HELEN was engaged in rinsing up the breakfast dishes, thinking busily meantime what could be done for Herbert, when a gentle tap called her to the door. Wondering a little at so early a call, she looked up to meet the smiling face of Mr. Sharp.

"Good morning, Mr. Sharp," she said, politely. "Won't you come in and see papa?"

"Thank you, my dear Miss Ford; at the risk of interrupting your respected father in his valuable scientific labors I will yet do so. I am quite aware that I have called at an unseasonable hour. I should not have ventured to do it, but that I am summoned hither by business of

an important character—business, which I may venture to hope, will make me welcome."

"You are welcome, sir; we are always glad to see one who has shown himself a friend."

"Thank you, my dear Miss Ford. Such a testimony is most grateful to my feelings, the more so that I feel, so far as my intentions are concerned, it is not wholly undeserved."

"Papa, Mr. Sharp is here," said Helen, going up to her father, and laying her hand lightly upon his shoulder.

Rousing at the touch, Mr. Ford advanced and welcomed the lawyer cordially.

"I was just apologizing to your charming daughter for calling so early," said Mr. Sharp.

"There is no occasion for that," said Mr. Ford, courteously. "We don't stand on ceremony with our friends."

"I hope you will ever include me in that number. But my call this morning is of a business character."

"Shall I leave the room, papa?"

"No, my dear, I can have no business in which you are not equally interested."

"By no means, my dear Miss Ford; I particularly desire that you should be present. Mr. Ford, I called on your cousin Lewis last evening."

"And I suppose he renewed his offer," said Mr. Ford, hastily. "Tell him from me that I shall accept no pittance at his hands. The only proposition to which I shall listen is one that will surrender to me half of my father's estate."

"He has consented to such a surrender," said Mr. Sharp.

"My cousin has consented to yield me one half the estate!" exclaimed Mr. Ford, overwhelmed with astonishment.

Helen drew near, and listened intently, half believing she was dreaming.

"Read this," said the lawyer, showing the document he had extorted from the fears of Lewis Rand.

"Can this be genuine?"

"There can be no doubt of that. Mr. Rand signed it in my presence."

"But I cannot account for such a change in him."

"I can," said Mr. Sharp, smiling. "Indeed, I may say that it is entirely owing to my persuasions that the change is due."

"You have, indeed, been a friend," said Mr. Ford, grasping his hand, warmly; "but I am still at a loss——"

"To understand the secret of my influence?"

"Yes."

"I will not conceal from you that your cousin acted very much against his will; but I employed an argument which he found it impossible to resist."

"And that was——"

"A police officer, and a warrant for his arrest."

"Have you arrested Lewis?"

"No, I only used these *in terrorem*. Threatening breaks no bones, but sometimes serves a useful purpose, as in this case. Not to keep you in suspense, however, a singular and unexpected chance threw in my way the proofs of your cousin's complicity in a forged will by which he holds the estate. Acting as your unauthorized agent, yet

feeling sure that you would give me a warrant for my proceedings, I brought these to bear upon him, but agreed in your name to stay further proceedings against him if he would quietly yield to you one half of all the property left by your late father. Was I right in making this agreement?"

"Quite so. I have no desire to subject my cousin to any legal penalties. It is enough that he has done me tardy justice. But how shall I thank you, Mr. Sharp, for your friendly and disinterested service?"

"My dear Mr. Ford," said Mr. Sharp, with effusion, "I feel abundantly repaid in having been the humble agent of restoring to you and my charming young friend, Miss Helen, that property which rightfully belongs to you. Yet, if you desire to acknowledge in any way the obligation, I will suggest that you will probably require a man of business, to undertake the charge of your large property. I believe I am right in asserting that you will not desire so far to interrupt your scientific pursuits, for the petty details of business, to which an inferior capacity can equally well attend. Should you so far honor me with your confidence, as to intrust that business to my charge, to select me, in fact, as your lawyer and man of business, I trust I shall do all that is possible to any one to promote your interests."

"Mr. Sharp," said Mr. Ford, "if you will undertake that office, I shall regard it as a fresh kindness on your part. You are well aware that I have little business capacity. The accession of wealth I shall not permit materially to interfere with my scientific pursuits. Indeed, it is partly because it will facilitate them, that I am thankful

for this change in my circumstances. Let me add, that I shall desire to compensate your services liberally."

"Thank you," said Mr. Sharp, with feeling; "I feel grateful for this mark of your confidence. I will not hesitate even to accept the compensation to which you so delicately allude, and trust I shall be able to show you that I am sensible of the great privilege of being admitted to your friendship."

"Mr. Sharp," said Helen, thoughtfully, "can you give me any idea of the value of the property which has come to papa?"

"I cannot, of course, give you any definite statement, my dear Miss Ford. From investigations I have made, however, I can assure you that it will exceed half a million dollars."

"I am *so* glad," exclaimed Helen, looking quite radiant.

"Why, Helen," said her father, roused into surprise; "I had no idea you were grown so fond of money!"

"It is because of the good we can do with so much, papa. Indeed, I want to dispose of some at once."

"Speak, Helen. It must be a large favor that I would not grant you."

"But this is a hundred and fifty dollars, papa."

"Half an hour since that would have seemed a large sum to me, Helen; now, I believe I can afford it. Tell me what use you wish to make of it."

"You know Herbert Coleman, papa, the young artist opposite."

"A very gentlemanly young man. Well, my dear?"

"He is in great trouble. His money is exhausted, and because he is so young and unknown, he cannot sell his picture. He has had an offer from his uncle to go into a country store to sell groceries, and fears he must abandon art and accept this offer, for want of money to keep him here in New York. He told me last evening that if he could only sell his picture—you have seen it, papa: the 'Country Farm-house,' you know—for a hundred and fifty dollars, he could remain in the city six months longer."

"And you want me to buy the picture, Helen?"

"Yes, papa."

"Very well, but I have not so much ready money. I do not understand such things. Mr. Sharp will know whether there will be any delay in coming into possession of this property."

"Very little, sir, since there is no opposition to fear from the opposing party. In the course of a few days——"

"But he has got to decide to-day," said Helen.

"If he is sure of a sale, however, he will wait for the money," suggested the lawyer.

"But there is one thing," said Helen. "I don't want Herbert to know just at first that it is we who have bought his picture."

"Leave that to me," said Mr. Sharp. "I can tell him that I have a commission from a friend to purchase for him, without mentioning names, you know."

"Yes, that will be just the thing," said Helen, well satisfied. "Will you go in now?"

"By all means, if you desire it."

"And I want to go with you," said Helen. "I want to see how delighted he will look when he finds his picture is bought. Only please don't tell him just yet that we are rich, papa and I."

"Be assured, my dear Miss Ford, I will respect your wishes." said Mr. Sharp, bowing. "Indeed, I honor you for your kind and generous desire to assist your struggling friends."

"I think, Mr. Sharp," said Mr. Ford, quietly, "that I will authorize you to pay Mr. Coleman two hundred dollars for his picture, and to order of him another at the same price, the subject to be entirely of his own selection. Do you approve, Helen?"

"Approve, papa? You are the dearest of all papas, You have made me very happy."

"My dear child," said her father, affectionately, "I feel that I ought to do what I can to make you happy. You have been my joy and comfort, and latterly my support, in the days of my poverty. Henceforth, it shall be mine to gratify you in all your reasonable desires."

"Papa, you embolden me to ask another favor."

"Well, Helen?"

"I will tell you by and by. Now, Mr. Sharp, let us go and see Herbert."

"Herbert is a fortunate young man," thought the lawyer. "He seems in favor with both father and daughter. If Helen were a little older, who can tell what would come of it. It will be worth my while to be polite to the young man."

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW YES BECAME NO.

Herbert Coleman had finished his scanty and unsatisfying breakfast, and was seated before his easel, on which was an unfinished picture. He gazed at it mournfully, for the conviction was deepening in his mind that he must bid farewell to art. Chosen mistress of his affections, she had treated him but coldly. She had admitted him to the threshold of her domain. He was permitted to view the glories in which he must not share. A career was opened before him, which it would have been his highest happiness to follow,—in which he could see others making their way successfully; but Necessity, with stern and forbidding countenance, waved him back as with a sword.

Yes, he must bid farewell to art. At the age of twenty-one, he felt that the happiness of his life was over. Henceforth, he must cherish in his heart aspirations which he would never be able to realize. He must descend from the clouds, and plod on in the prosaic way in which his uncle, with more common tastes, had found happiness and prosperity. But the transition from art to groceries was indeed great. Yet there seemed no alternation. If it were possible to find employment for a part of the day, sufficient to defray expenses reduced to the lowest amount compatible with health, that would be preferable.

But this was uncertain, and, meanwhile, his purse was almost empty.

"I might as well accept my uncle's offer, at once," he said, to himself, despondently. "Nothing is likely to turn up in twenty-four hours to affect my decision. Come, I will write the letter now, and not mail it till to-morrow."

Feeling that his mind would be relieved by taking a decisive step, he opened his desk, and, taking out a sheet of note-paper, had got as far as "Dear Uncle," when there was a little tap at the door. He rose, and, opening it, discovered Helen and Mr. Sharp.

"Good morning, Helen," he said, cheered, he knew not why, by her expression; "I am glad to see you."

"Herbert, you have heard me speak of Mr. Sharp, papa's friend. He desires to make your acquaintance."

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Sharp," said the young artist, looking a little curiously at the perpetual white hat, whose general appearance age had, by no means, improved.

"Thank you, Mr. Herbert," said the lawyer, nodding pleasantly. "Excuse my familiar use of your name, but Miss Helen has not mentioned any other."

"Mr. Coleman, excuse me," said Helen, blushing a little. "How stupid I am!"

"By no means, my dear young lady. But, Mr. Coleman, Miss Helen has told me that you were an artist, and her commendations of one of your pictures have excited my interest; and I have come to ask, as a favor, that you will allow me to look at it."

"Certainly, sir. I am afraid, however, that you will find Miss Helen's friendship has dulled her critical powers. This is probably the painting to which you refer."

In a moment of despondency, he had turned his painting of the "Country Farm-house" to the wall. The high hopes which he had formed of its success, and their signal failure, produced a revulsion of feeling, which made it unpleasant for him to look at it.

"This is indeed beautiful!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, admiringly. (In this case he was sincere, though, had it been the merest daub, he would have expressed equal admiration.) "Mr. Coleman, I congratulate you. There are touches in that painting which indicate genius of a high order. I predict that you will, ere many years, achieve a high place in the roll of our native artists."

Herbert smiled sadly, and glanced significantly at Helen. This praise, coming at a time when he had resolved to cut adrift from the profession of his love, was a source of pain rather than pleasure. He felt the more that it would be a fatal mistake, but, nevertheless, one that seemed inevitable.

Helen's expression perplexed him. It was one of quiet happiness. Yet she must know the necessity that was upon him.

"I like this painting," continued the lawyer, "chiefly because of its truth to nature. The highest praise I can give it is that I have seen precisely such a farm-house. The scene is one familiar to those who know anything of country-

life. May I inquire, Mr. Coleman, whether this painting is for sale?"

"Yes, sir," said Herbert, brightening up a little, though he hardly judged, from Mr. Sharp's appearance, that he was likely to become a patron of art. "Young artists cannot afford to keep their works on hand. I may add, frankly, that my circumstances are such that I shall be very glad to find a purchaser."

"I don't ask in my own behalf," said Mr. Sharp. "Though I am passionately fond of fine paintings, my means are restricted, and my professional income will not permit me to indulge in such luxuries. But I am authorized by one of my clients, to purchase him a painting. He confides implicitly to my taste. May I inquire what price you set upon this painting?"

The young artist's face brightened up with newborn hope. Perhaps he might be able to send a negative answer to his uncle, after all.

"Should you consider fifty dollars too large?" he said, hesitatingly, fearing lest it might exceed Mr. Sharp's limit.

"Fifty dollars, Mr. Coleman! You surely cannot be in earnest."

"I am a young artist," stammered Herbert, "and, perhaps, may have set too high a value upon my work. You shall have it at your own price."

"You mistake me, my young friend, if you will permit me to call you so. I was only surprised at the lowness of your price. My friend has authorized me to pay two hundred dollars for such a work as my taste approves. I shall not think of offering you less for this beautiful painting."

"Two hundred dollars!" exclaimed Herbert, in joyful excitement. "Are you really in earnest?"

"Most unquestionably."

"I am very grateful to you, sir; you can't understand how great a service you have rendered me," said Herbert, grasping Mr. Sharp's hand, and wringing it with cordial energy. "Just as you came in I was on the point of writing a letter, accepting a proposition which would cut me off forever from my favorite work."

"You won't write it, now, Herbert?" said Helen, archly.

"I shall write a different letter, Helen. Once more, Mr. Sharp, let me thank you."

"I do not deserve your thanks. Some day I will introduce you to the real purchaser of the painting. Meanwhile, I have a commission for you. I am authorized, by my friend, to order another picture at the same price. Will you undertake it?"

"Most willingly; most gratefully."

"The subject shall be left to your own taste and judgment."

"I hope to deserve this generous confidence."

"Perhaps, Herbert, you would rather go into your uncle's store," said Helen, smiling happily.

"I am afraid Uncle Zebina must look elsewhere for an assistant," said the young artist. "I must not forget, dear Helen, that my good fortune comes through you."

"You have been very kind to me, Herbert. I hope I shall be able to do more for you hereafter."

"I regret, Mr. Coleman," said the lawyer, "that I am unable to pay you this morning for

your painting. I hope to be able to pay you next week."

"That will be quite satisfactory, sir."

"Meanwhile, as one who understands the world a little better than yourself, to suggest that, if your painting could be on exhibition a few days, —at Goupil's, for instance,—with the name of the artist, and the label, 'Sold,' it might be of assistance to you. It will give the impression that your works are in demand."

"A most excellent suggestion, for which I thank you. If your friend would be willing?"

"I undertake to engage that there will be no objection. Depend upon it, my young friend, there is nothing succeeds so well as success."

"You may be sure, sir, that I appreciate your friendly feeling no less than the liberal patronage I have received through you. You have probably determined my future."

"That will be a source of proud satisfaction to me, Mr. Coleman," said the lawyer. "Let me suggest that you lose no time in making an arrangement to exhibit your painting as proposed. It might do no harm to affix the price for which it was sold."

Thank you, sir. It is well thought of. I shall certainly adopt your suggestion."

"I believe I must now bid you good morning," said the lawyer. "I have important business on hand, and have been beguiled already into remaining here too long. Good morning, Miss Helen. I shall take a very early opportunity to call again upon you and your worthy father. You will hear from me before long, Mr. Coleman, in a way that will, I trust, prove satisfactory to you."

Mr. Sharp bowed his way down-stairs, leaving two happy hearts behind him. He, too, was in excellent spirits. As Mr. Ford's man of business, he would be liberally paid, and no longer be reduced to those shifts to which, in times past, he had been compelled to resort, for the purpose of "getting along."

Helen lingered a moment after the lawyer departed. "Now to finish Uncle Zebina's letter," said Herbert, briskly. "It will be a letter different from what I anticipated."

The letter ran as follows:—

"DEAR UNCLE ZEBINA: I thank you for your very kind offer, though I shall be unable to accept it. I feel that I shall be happier as an artist, than I could be in any other vocation. I am confident that you will have no difficulty in securing an assistant who will suit you better than I should do. Give my love to Aunt Desire. Tell her and all my friends that I hope to see them all at Thanksgiving.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"HERBERT COLEMAN.

"P. S. I have just sold a painting for two hundred dollars, and have an order for another at the same price."

This letter, it may be remarked, more especially the postcript, made quite a sensation in Herbert's country home; and Uncle Zebina allowed that perhaps Herbert was doing better, after all, than if he had become a house painter.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MARTHA GREY IS SURPRISED.

Lewis Rand submitted to what was inevitable, and, as Mr. Sharp predicted, interposed no obstacles in the way of a division of the property. He chose to retain in his own share the house and furniture of the late Mr. Rand, foreseeing that the house would rise annually in value. The remainder of the property consisted partly of real estate, but mainly of stocks and bonds. This rendered the division easy. At the end of ten days, Mr. Sharp was in a situation to deliver to his client the title to three houses situated in different parts of the city, and a quarter of a million in bank and railway shares.

Until matters were concluded, Helen desired that the fact of their good fortune should be kept strictly private. Neither Martha nor Herbert suspected that their humble neighbors had fallen heirs to a princely fortune.

One of the three houses referred to was situated in Twenty-second Street. It was nearly new, and thoroughly furnished. Fortunately, it had just been vacated by a family on the point of visiting Europe for a series of years. By Mr. Sharp's advice, negotiations for the purchase of the furniture was entered into and satisfactorily completed. To this house Helen and her father proposed to remove.

Thanks to Helen's good care, and the rest which

she so much needed, Martha Grey had quite recovered from the attack brought on by excessive labor. She was anxious to resume work, but Helen had succeeded in putting her off.

"I shall certainly begin to-morrow," said Martha, one evening. "I cannot consent longer to remain a burden upon you."

"But if I were rich," said Helen, with a smile.

"That would be different."

"Well, Martha, I may become rich some day."

"I hope you will, my dear child."

"But you don't expect it. Yet stranger things have happened. Now, Martha, I have a promise to exact of you. When I am rich, will you come and live with me?"

Martha smiled.

"Yes, Helen, *when* you are rich, I will come and live with you."

"Mind you don't forget your promise. I may remind you of it some day."

"Poor child!" thought Martha. "She means, when her father has completed his invention. I am afraid it will be a long time before that will bring her a fortune."

The next morning, Martha was sitting in her little rocking-chair, busy at her sewing, when Helen came in with a smile.

"Put down that sewing directly, Martha," she said. "I have another plan for to-day."

"But, my dear child, I must disobey you this time. It is quite time that I was again at work."

"You can put off your sewing for a couple of hours. Mr. Sharp has been kind enough to invite you and papa and myself to take a ride."

"He is very kind," said Martha. "I don't know why he should think of me."

"Perhaps he thought it would do you good. He knew you had been sick."

"But I have nothing fit to wear."

"Am I very richly dressed?"

"No, but——"

"No objections, Martha. Get your bonnet and shawl directly."

It was a beautiful morning,—an Indian summer day,—the air balmy and sweet as a day in early June. The seamstress yielded not unwillingly to the solicitations of Helen, and was quickly dressed for the drive.

Mr. Sharp was waiting below with a carriage.

"Good morning, Miss Grey," he said, with his usual suavity; "I am truly glad to see that you have recovered from your illness. You are a little pale yet, but I hope we shall succeed in bringing back the roses to your cheek."

"I am very much obliged to you for kindly remembering me, Mr. Sharp," said Martha. "It is a charming day. I assure you I shall enjoy the drive."

"It seems to me," thought M'lle Fanchette, looking from her window, "that the Fords are growing extravagant. Such airs as that child puts on, merely because she sings in a theatre! and bless my soul, there's the seamstress, Martha Grey, too! She'd better be at work. There's the lawyer, too. It can't be possible he is paying attentions to Helen Ford. No, she's too young for that. Or is it Martha Grey? If it's she, I don't admire his taste, that's all. She is most an old woman, and never had any beauty to boast of.

(Martha was three years younger than M'lle Fanchette. Well, well, it's a queer world. That Helen may lose her situation by and by,—I'm sure, I don't think much of her singing,—and then we sha'n't have such gay doings."

By this time the carriage had driven away, and M'lle Fanchette prepared to go to her shop.

Our party did not at once drive to Twenty-second street, but farther up on the island, through that portion of the city, then wholly unsettled, which is now occupied by the Central Park. It was a charming morning. Helen was in the best of spirits, and even Mr. Ford forgot, for the time, his invention, and drank in the sweet influences of the day. To Martha, confined in her room for so long, whose only prospect had been the brick wall opposite, it seemed like a dream of Paradise. Memories of her childhood came back to her, and her eyes involuntarily filled with tears as she thought of that sweet, unforgotten time. Mr. Sharp was in excellent spirits, livelier, and more affable even than usual, and kept up the spirits of the party by his jocular remarks.

At length the carriage stopped.

The driver jumped from his seat, and threw open the door of the carriage.

"We haven't got home?" said Martha, a little bewildered.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said Helen; "Mr. Sharp has invited us to look over a house which he has just secured for some friends of his."

"What a handsome house!" said Martha. "They must be rich people."

"Yes," said Mr. Sharp, with an incomprehen-

sible smile, "I assure you that they are quite rich."

"They wouldn't object to our visit?" asked Martha, timidly.

"O no, not at all. In fact they gave me permission to bring you here."

By this time they had entered the hall, and went in first to inspect the parlors. These were furnished in the style appropriate to such a house. To Martha, who had never before entered a house of such pretensions, it seemed very magnificent, and even palatial.

After they had examined the rooms on the lower floor they went up-stairs. The chambers were furnished with equal taste. Helen felt that it would take some time to get accustomed to such a style of living after her humble lodgings at Mother Morton's.

"I like this room very much," said Martha. It was a broad, spacious chamber with a sunny aspect, very pleasant and home-like in its appearance.

"You would be willing to give up your room at Mrs. Morton's if you could have this?" inquired Helen.

"If I could have as agreeable neighbors," said Martha, with a smile.

"Very well," said Helen, "I will take you at your word. You shall occupy this room."

"What do you mean, Helen?" asked Martha, in surprise.

"I mean that it only depends upon your own consent to exchange your present room for this."

"I don't understand," said Martha, bewildered.

"Then I will explain. The mistress of this house, who is a friend of Mr. Sharp, is desirous of securing a companion, and will take you if you will come."

"Perhaps she may not like me."

"I think there is no doubt on that point; do you, papa?"

"No, I believe not," said Mr. Ford.

"Then you will consent, Martha. You will be secure against want, and will have every comfort provided you."

"It will be great good fortune for me," said Martha. "But I cannot bear the thought of being separated from you, Helen."

"You may learn to like the lady I refer to as well as me."

"Never!" said Martha, with emphasis.

"Make no rash promises," said Helen, "I shall be very much disappointed if you do not."

"If I could see this lady."

"So you shall. You will find her in the next room."

More mystified than ever, Martha accompanied Helen into the next room. There was a large pier glass extending from floor to ceiling. Helen led the seamstress up to it, and standing beside her said, "There, Martha, there is the lady who invites you to be her companion."

"But I see only yourself."

"Well, and I am the one," said Helen, smiling.

Then Helen explained to her astonished and delighted auditor the great change that had taken place in her circumstances. No longer obliged

to toil for her daily bread, she would henceforth live in affluence.

"God has been very good to us, Martha," she said, in conclusion. "I hope we shall not forget, in the happiness of the present, the poverty of the past. I hope we shall use His gift as He would have us."

"Dear Helen, I am sure you will."

"And you will come and live with me? I should be very lonely in this large house without a friend to lean upon. Dear Martha, it shall not be my fault if your future is not as sunny as your past has been dark."

"How much happiness I shall owe you!" said Martha, with grateful tears.

"Hush, Martha," said Helen, softly. "Do not thank me, for my happiness will be no less."

That evening the household at Mother Morton's was electrified by the announcement that Helen Ford had turned out a great heiress, and that Martha Grey was going to live with her. On the morrow Helen and her father transferred their home from their humble lodgings to Twenty-second Street.

"If I had only known," thought M'lle Fanchette, regretfully, "I might have been in that sickly Martha Grey's place. But who could ever have imagined that Helen Ford would turn out a rich woman? Well, it's too late now!"

And M'lle Fanchette had to content herself with this philosophical reflection.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HELEN TAKES LEAVE OF THE STAGE.

The next morning Helen, on reaching the theatre, sought the presence of Mr. Bowers.

The manager was seated in his office, as usual. He nodded carelessly as Helen entered, but did not invite her to be seated.

"Well, Miss Ford," he said, after a while. "What can I do for you, this morning?"

"I should like to have you release me from my engagement, if you please, Mr. Bowers."

"Release you from your engagement!" ejaculated the astonished manager. Then, in a tone of indignation, "I suppose you have had a larger offer elsewhere."

"No, sir."

"What can be your motive, then? I beg you to understand, Miss Ford, that a contract is a contract, and must be kept. Of course your place could be supplied, but it is annoying to make a change in the middle of the season."

This last remark was thrown in, lest Helen should presume upon her value to the establishment to demand a higher salary. Indeed, the manager suspected that this was her object, and wished to anticipate her.

"I was afraid it might inconvenience you," said Helen, gently; "and am willing, in requital, to refund the whole amount of wages that I have received from you."

Mr. Bowers stared at Helen in undisguised astonishment. She must have had a very brilliant offer to warrant her in making such a proposal.

"Did I understand that you have had no other engagement offered you?" he inquired, abruptly.

"No, sir. I do not wish to sing any more in public."

"It will pay you better than anything else you can do."

"I ought to explain that I have had a fortune left me, or rather papa has, and under our new circumstances it would be inconvenient for me to come to the theatre every evening."

"Indeed, Miss Ford!" said Mr. Bowers, his tone changing. "I congratulate you. I hope, for your sake, it is a large fortune."

"Mr. Sharp tells me that it will be a few hundred thousand dollars," said Helen, simply, without the least trace of exultation in her tone.

"A few hundred thousand dollars!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, in profound astonishment. "Pray, take a seat, my dear Miss Ford. Hang my stupidity, why didn't I think to offer you one before?"

And Mr. Bowers bustled about, and offered Helen a seat with as much deference as if she were a duchess. It was easy to see that she had risen immeasurably in his estimation.

"Did the property come from a relation?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; from my grandfather."

"Was his name the same with yours, Miss Ford?"

"No, sir. His name was Rand."

"Not the late Gerald Rand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why he was one of our most substantial citizens—lived on Fifth Avenue. And to think I should have had his granddaughter singing in my theatre! Well, wonders will never cease."

"If it wouldn't inconvenience you too much to release me," said Helen, returning to her petition; "I like to be with papa in the evening. He is lonely without me."

"By all means, Miss Ford, I would oblige you even were the inconvenience ten times as great," said Mr. Bowers, obsequiously.

"Thank you, sir; you are very kind. I shall be willing to sing for you the rest of the week, so as to give you time to find some one to fill my place."

"Will you?" asked the manager, eagerly, seeing at once how he might turn Helen's accession of fortune to profitable account; "you will indeed confer a great favor upon me by so doing. It will take me some time to fill your place, and I cannot hope to obtain a substitute who will become such a favorite with the public."

"Thank you, sir," said Helen, rising to go. "Then I will go to rehearsal."

"Thank you rather, my dear Miss Ford," said the manager, rising from his seat and opening the door for her. "I shall not forget your kindness."

Helen could not help wondering a little at the change in the manager's manner, and, unversed as she was in the ways of the world, she could not help seeing that it was the result of her change of circumstances.

Meanwhile the manager was not idle. The morning papers contained the following paragraph, the authorship of which may at least be suspected.

Romance in Real Life. We understand that Miss Helen Ford, the young vocalist whose charming melodies have made her such a popular favorite, has just come into possession of a splendid fortune, inherited from her grandfather, Gerald Rand, Esq., the well-known capitalist, whose death was recently noticed in our columns. Miss Ford has kindly agreed to sing as usual through the present week, when she will leave the stage forever."

The effect of this paragraph may be imagined. That evening hundreds were turned away from the theatre, which was crowded to its utmost capacity. Never had such an audience been seen within its walls. When Helen appeared on the stage, quite unaware of the paragraph which had produced this effect, she was received with long-continued applause. The vast audience seemed inspired with a sudden enthusiasm.

Helen was surprised, but did not lose her self-possession. She sang with her usual sweetness, and was immediately encored. Again she sang, and this time was called before the curtain. Several bouquets were thrown her, which she picked up, and hastily withdrew.

If Helen had been older, she would have understood the meaning of this ovation. As it was, she only wondered.

Behind the curtain she met the manager, smiling, and rubbing his hands in evident glee.

"My dear Miss Ford," he said, "this is indeed a triumph."

"The house is very full," said Helen.

"And hundreds turned away; never was such a house seen."

"I am very glad of it," said Helen.

"So am I; let me see, this is Tuesday evening. Friday you shall have a benefit. One third of the receipts. It is only fair, since you have drawn this immense audience."

Helen would have declined the offer, but for a sudden thought. When she first became connected with the theatre she noticed a thin fragile girl, who danced between the plays. The exertion was evidently too great for her, for she was often seized with a violent fit of coughing after withdrawing from the stage. For a fortnight Helen had missed her. On inquiry, she learned that Alice (this was her name) was sick. "Poor girl," added the prompter, who was her informant, "it is a great misfortune, for she has an invalid sister who is dependent upon her for support. I am afraid she won't get along very well, for her salary was small, and now it is cut off altogether."

It occurred to Helen that she could give the proceeds of her benefit to Alice. She accordingly thanked Mr. Bowers, and accepted his proposal.

The week was a series of triumphs. Every evening the doors of the theatre were besieged, and every evening hundreds were turned away.

Friday evening,—the evening of her benefit,—Helen found the house fuller, if possible, than before, the manager had taken the opportunity, in

consequence of the great demand for seats, to raise temporarily the price of admission. As he anticipated, this did not in the least diminish the throngs who crowded for admittance.

On Saturday morning he handed Helen a check for five hundred dollars, as her share of the proceeds.

Helen's eyes sparkled with joy, as she thought of the happiness which this sum would bring to the poor ballet girl.

She lost no time in seeking her out.

It was indeed a poor place, Helen would have been afraid of venturing into such a locality if she had not been accompanied by Herbert Coleman.

Up a rickety staircase she climbed, and was shown, by an untidy woman, into a room wholly destitute of comforts, where on a pallet reclined Alice and her sister, both sick.

"Is that you, Miss Ford?" asked Alice, her face lighting up. "How very kind you are to come and see me!"

"I am very sorry to find you so sick," said Helen.

"I don't think I am very sick," said Alice. "But this is but a poor place, and I cannot get any one to take care of my sister Jennie. She has been an invalid for years."

"There are better times in store," said Helen, cheerfully.

"First we must have you moved to a better room. Next you must have a nurse."

"But," said Alice, hesitatingly, "we are very poor. I never had anything but my salary to depend upon, and now that is cut off."

Helen stooped and whispered a few words in her ear.

"Five hundred dollars!" repeated Alice, in astonishment, "that is a fortune. Who has been so generous?"

"Never mind!" said Helen, smiling. "You see, then, that you are not so poor as you imagined. Now do you think, if I sent a carriage for you in the course of the afternoon, you can move?"

"Yes," said Alice, in a tone of deep thankfulness. "No one can tell how much I detest this horrible place. I think it will make me well only to move."

Over the wasted face of her sister there stole an expression of deep and thankful joy.

"I think you are an angel," she said, looking up into Helen's beautiful face, radiant with sympathy.

Helen blushed.

"How pleasant it is to be able to make others happy!" she said, softly, to Herbert.

"Do you know, Helen," said the young artist, "I am half tempted to agree with your patient there."

"Brother Herbert," said Helen, quickly, "you must not speak so. I am only doing what you would do in my place. I don't like to be praised for only doing what is pleasant to me."

Before night Alice and her sister were installed in a comfortably-furnished room, with a nurse in attendance, who was directed to do whatever was needful for the comfort and relief of her patients.

CHAPTER XLV.

TO CONCLUDE.

Four years slipped by.

Let us note, briefly, the changes which they brought, and then farewell!

To Helen they were years of quiet happiness, of steady improvement. There were many deficiencies in her education to be made up. With the aid of private instructors, the best of their kind, she strove earnestly to acquire the knowledge for which she had long thirsted. Her father was unwilling to send her away to school, since this must deprive him of her society, on which he had learned to depend. Nor was Helen less unwilling to leave the father who had called forth from her so rare and beautiful a devotion. Year by year her mind has expanded, while her rare loveliness has, if possible, been enhanced. Helen, at nineteen, is even more charming than at fifteen.

There are some who have found this out, and Helen has had repeated offers of marriage. All these she has gently but firmly refused. Not one has succeeded in touching her heart.

Among her suitors was one whom she treated with less ceremony. A young man, who had nearly run through a large fortune, paid assiduous court to Helen, whom he had met in society, and in spite of her coldness made a declaration of love.

Helen looked up from the carpet on which her

eyes had been fixed, and said, quietly, "Do you remember, Mr. Grover, where we first met?"

"At Mrs. Grosvenor's party," answered the young man, somewhat surprised.

"You are mistaken. That was only three months since. Our first meeting dates back four years."

"Thank you for remembering it. Yet I can hardly believe you correct. Your face is not one to be forgotten. Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, I remember you perfectly."

There was something in Helen's manner which the young man could not quite fathom. It made him uneasy, for Helen's grave tone rendered it doubtful whether the recollection was a pleasant one.

"May I ask where, and under what circumstances, we met?" he inquired.

"I was, at that time, singing at the ——— Theatre," returned Helen, composedly. "You followed me in the street when on my return home, and sought to force your company upon me. But for the opportune arrival of a friend, I should have been obliged to submit to the insult."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Albert Grover, "are you the young singer who made such a sensation? I cannot understand it."

"Fortunes have changed with me," said Helen. "Otherwise, I can well understand that you would never have honored me with your proposal of this morning. I think, Mr. Grover, you will hardly require any other answer."

She left the room with dignity, leaving her suitor crestfallen, and entirely satisfied of the hopelessness of his suit.

Meanwhile, where was Herbert Coleman?

Shortly after Mr. Ford's accession to fortune, he sent for the young artist at Helen's instigation, and questioned him delicately as to his plans and wishes. Herbert acknowledged frankly his conviction, that a residence in Italy, the cradle of art, would be of inestimable advantage to him in his professional career.

"I have thought of that," said Mr. Ford, and as Providence has blessed me with abundant means I have determined to enable you to gratify your desire. I do not wish to compromise your independence, and therefore I will not offer to give you the requisite sum. I should be glad to have copies of some of the masterpieces of Italian art. I am willing to invest five thousand dollars in this way. I will give you the commission. This will enable you to spend three years abroad. Here is a check for a thousand dollars. The balance I authorize you to draw upon me for as you need it."

"Sir," said Herbert, with joyful emotion, "your generosity overwhelms me. I cannot express to you how happy you have made me. I hope that I shall prove deserving of such kindness."

"You must thank Helen," said Mr. Ford. "She suggested this to me; though I think she will do me the justice to acknowledge that she did not find me very difficult to persuade."

"Dear Helen," said the young artist, turning to the young girl whose beaming face expressed how heartily she sympathized in his joy, "I am not surprised to hear this. It is so like you."

"Don't say any more, Herbert," said Helen, softly. "That repays me."

Herbert's residence in Italy has been protracted somewhat beyond the three years originally intended. He has already sent home several paintings, originals, as well as copies, which prove conclusively that he has not mistaken his vocation. He has corresponded regularly with Helen, and she is eagerly expecting his return in the next steamer. They have tacitly dropped the old designations of brother and sister. Knowing what we do of their feelings towards each other, we need not be surprised if they are bound some day by a nearer tie. Mr. Ford, I am assured, will interpose no objection, feeling that genius and nobility of soul far outweigh the mere accident of riches.

Mr. Ford has long since given up his invention as impracticable. He has gathered about him a rich library in which he spends the hours formerly given to science. A year since he laid out the plan of a large work in the department of mechanics upon which he is hard at work. It will probably require some years to complete it.

Mr. Sharp still acts as the business agent of Mr. Ford, and through his influence has obtained other business, so that he is now in receipt of a very comfortable income. Justice compels me to state that in spite of his not very creditable antecedents, he serves Mr. Ford with ability and fidelity, and exhibits a good judgment in his management of money matters, which perhaps could hardly have been expected. He is not entirely rid of his "idiosyncrasies," but these are now of a harmless nature. He no longer runs up bills

which he is unable to liquidate, and has ceased to exercise his professional sharpness on the newsboys.

Martha Grey still finds a home with Helen, and is her tried and confidential friend. She is no longer obliged to labor hard for a scanty remuneration. Her "lines have fallen in pleasant places." Privation and discomfort have been succeeded by ease and luxury. A month since she was surprised by a proposal of marriage from Mr. Sharp. She refused him gently, telling him that she should never marry. I do not think she will. She has never recovered from an early disappointment, which, without robbing her of happiness, has made it impossible for her to love again. Mr. Sharp has resigned himself to his rejection with commendable philosophy. There is reason to believe that he was actuated less by a romantic attachment, than by the thought that Martha, as the intimate friend of Helen, would not come to him a portionless bride. He has already so far recovered from his disappointment, that he is paying devoted attentions to a wealthy widow, who seems disposed to smile upon his suit, whose "idiosyncrasies" of temper are such, that success would indeed be disastrous. I have had some qualms of conscience, in rewarding Mr. Sharp with such a measure of worldly prosperity, feeling that he ought rather to have been punished than recompensed; but if he should persevere in his present suit, and eventually succeed, I feel that the sternest advocate of "poetical justice" may well be satisfied.

Mrs. Morton still keeps her boarding-house, and still meets with a fair share of patronage

Helen occasionally calls upon her. She has not forgotten her kindness in the days when she stood in need of a friend. M'lle Fanchette is still one of her lodgers. She does not grow old, having been twenty-seven for the last fifteen years. She brings her charms to bear upon each successive lodger whom she regards as eligible, but no one has yet had the courage to propose. There is reason to believe that she will remain Mademoiselle to the end of this chapter.

Margaret and Jacob Wynne! I name Margaret first, for hers is the nobler nature. Jacob's brief imprisonment had a most salutary influence upon him. He no longer upbraids without reason, nor arouses her quick jealousy by his neglect. Mr. Ford (after all we prefer the old name) throws considerable business into his hands, and this, with what he obtains from other quarters, gives him a comfortable support. It would be difficult to recognize in Margaret, with her quiet look, and subdued demeanor, the wild, wayward, desperate woman, who made her way through the fierce storm to her mother's dwelling.

Immediately after the division of the estate, Lewis Rand went to Europe, where he has remained ever since. His feelings are so imbittered against his cousin, that he has refused to answer a letter containing overtures of reconciliation. He makes his head-quarters at Paris, where he lives in elegant style, and receives the homage which wealth always commands. But does he find in his riches the full satisfaction which he anticipated? I answer, no. He finds, too late, that happiness must be earned; it can never be bought. To those who, like Helen, consecrate

their lives to the noblest objects, and study to promote the happiness of all around them, the blessing comes unsought. For the love that stimulates to good deeds, is like mercy "twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

And so, reader, farewell! What remains in store for Helen Ford, whether of joy or of sorrow, it is not mine to read. Let us hope that her life may brighten continually till its close; that her years, whether few or many, may be made happy by the consciousness of duty well performed; that she may dispense liberally unto others of the good gifts with which God has crowned her, and make her life a benefaction to humanity!